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Vol. L.



OR, The Evil Spirit of the Deep.

A Companion Story to "The
Ex-Buccaneer."

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THE "STILL SMALL VOICE OF CONSCIENCE."

A MAN was pacing to and fro in a handsomely-furnished room of a New York hotel situated in a quarter of the city then fashionable, for my story dates back to the earlier years of our country's history.

He was a man of fine presence, and wearing the uniform of one high in rank in the United States Navy, for officers wore their uniforms ashore as well as afloat in those days.

The brow of the man was clouded, and his mood seemed not a happy one, for his lips were set, and only by constant movement did he control the emotion that was surging within his breast.

THE POVER'S RETRIBUTION

BY HIS SIDE STOOD CAPTAIN CLAUDE TO KILL THE OUTLAW PILOT IF THE VESSEL
TOUCHED A ROCK.

One who could read well the human face would have at once said that the officer was suffering from a guilty conscience—that, in spite of his fine face and exalted rank, he had done that for which he was now suffering the twinges of remorse.

Listen to the muttered words, falling like a soliloquy from his lips as he paces to and fro, and see if the mind-reader has guessed aright.

"My God!" he exclaims, in a tone of bitterness, "if I could only wipe out the past! I believe I was born wholly selfish, and it only needed temptation to make me do what I was guilty of against that man and those he loved.

"Claude Cassiday, then a merchant-captain, risked his life to save my crew from our sinking brig that night of storm in Bahama waters. He made trip after trip through that wild sea, until he took us all off, and just in time, as the brig sunk before our eyes.

"True, I did all in my power to get him made an officer in our navy, and he honored the position; but then—!

"Ah, then it was I had the chance to show the cloven foot and did it.

"Lying on the coast of Mexico, he trusted in my honor and told me of the private treasure he had found on an island of the Bahamas, and nobly gave me half of the legacy if I would get it and divide with his wife and little daughter, for he believed his boy dead then, or a captain of pirates.

"I gave him my pledge, and Heaven knows I intended to keep it; but alas! my ambitious wife, when I told her all, forced me to say nothing of it to his family and to take all.

"I yielded, and disguised as a merchant-captain I made a trip on a small vessel in search of it.

"Great God! how vividly my sins come back to me now, for captured by pirates, I found there his son, a captive boy, and he aided our escape, to be cruelly deserted by me after all.

"Again I made another voyage, and lo! that boy turned up at sea in an open boat, he having made his escape from the pirates.

"But I had begun my act of crime to get the treasure, and again I deserted him, left him to die upon a barren island.

"And again I failed to get the treasure, and then, like a ghost to haunt me this boy looms up, having been rescued, and piloted a vessel-of-war to capture the pirates.

"He, in my very face, got a midshipman's berth for his services, and for fear he would recognize me I secured orders for a long foreign cruise.

"Then I returned home to find our humble cottage a palace, for my daring wife, armed with Cassiday's charts of the island, had gone and secured the pirate treasure herself.

"Alas, she lived not long to enjoy it, and died in the sea she had so daringly braved, and it were better so, for she was swamping even that large treasure, while now it makes 'my child, my beautiful Celeste, the richest heiress in the States, for well have I invested.'

"Yet, with all my riches, my idolized daughter, our grand home and my high rank, I am verily the most wretched man alive, for I sinned so grievously to get that treasure; I took the lives of the men who went with me, to cover up my tracks, and now can only live to suffer, to hide my secret from the world, of how I robbed Claude Cassiday's wife and children, now, as I learn in the deepest poverty and disgrace."

He paused and glanced out of the window upon the busy street; but it gave no cessation to his bitter thoughts and he soon resumed his soliloquizing half-aloud:

"How strange does destiny work against us.

"That poor boy, captured by pirates, making his escape after long captivity and serving his buccaneer masters as a junior officer, is made a midshipman in our navy.

"He distinguished himself by a gallant rescue of American prisoners from Algerine slavery, and then was dismissed the service in disgrace, accused of stealing money which I am sure he never did.

"Ah, me! I would give my life now could I undo what I have done— Ah! a knock at my door.

"Come in!"

The door opened and a young and beautiful girl entered, attired as though just having come from a journey.

"Father!"

"My child! you here in New York," and the cloud faded from the brow of the commodore as he infolded his daughter in his strong arms.

CHAPTER II.

SHADOWED LIVES.

COMMODORE HAROLD HARTWELL stood high in his profession, and was respected by his fellow-men.

He had married early in life a beautiful, brilliant girl, believing her to be rich, though to his credit be it said, he had loved her.

She had married the young naval officer be-

lieving him an heir to riches he had never received.

To her shame be it said she had never loved him or any one excepting herself.

She was haughty, ambitious, proud and daring, and she had by her pluck won the fortune her husband had failed to secure, in securing the pirate treasure of Claude Cassiday, and thus kept the legacy from the rightful heirs.

Launching forth into a life of wild extravagance, she had ended it by death, when on a yachting excursion her pleasure craft was run down at sea and she alone was drowned.

Then the commodore had taken the reins of government into his hands and so invested his riches as to be able to leave his daughter a fortune worthy of a princess.

Celeste, under the charge of an efficient governess, had lived in her home on Boston Bay, while her father had cruised with his squadron, and had only that day put into New York, when he is introduced to the reader.

But Celeste had known of her father's expected coming to New York in his flag-ship, and she had come there to see him upon a mission which their conversation together will make known.

"My child, what can have brought you here to New York?" cried the commodore, delighted at the coming of his daughter.

"To see you, you dear old papa, of course, and my governess, Miss Du Vale is with me.

"We only arrived a short while ago, and the landlord sent up word that you were here, so I came at once to your room to surprise you."

"And a glad surprise it is, my dear; but how did you come?"

"By the packet-schooner, sir."

"What! were you out in that hurricane of last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"I never saw a worse storm, and only the best seamanship saved our large vessels."

"Only the best seamanship saved our little packet-schooner, father."

"I can swear to that, my child."

"Our captain was badly hurt, by the parting of the main-sheet halliard. His first-mate had been left behind by the bedside of a dying wife, and his second-mate was a new man."

"But there happened to be upon the schooner an ex-naval officer, and he took charge and saved the ship, though we lost several men overboard."

"I shall call upon the brave fellow and thank him, Celeste—"

"You have to thank him for more than that, father, and that is why I am here to see you."

"You look worried, my child, so tell me if aught has gone wrong?"

"Yes, father, an attempt was made to kidnap me several nights ago."

"To kidnap you?" cried the commodore, excitedly.

"Yes, father, and I will tell you all about it."

"Pray do so, and at once, for you frighten me, Celeste, to know the danger you have passed through."

"Well, sir, to begin, I will say that Miss Du Vale was working up to midnight, upon some things to be sold at the Church Charity Social, when these men, who had gotten into the house in some mysterious way, entered our rooms.

"Miss Du Vale gave a cry of alarm, and was felled to the floor, while a towel saturated with a drug to render her unconscious was thrown over her face."

"I was seized and wrapped in a blanket, which kept me as though securely bound, hands and feet."

"This is infamous! but where were the servants?"

"Some of them were away at a party, the others in their rooms asleep."

"Tell me all."

"The man who held me made his two comrades search the rooms for valuables, and they secured considerable, when all started to leave."

"Going down the stairs I saw a fourth man, like the others in sailor garb, and whom I believed also one of the band of kidnappers and robbers."

"The others did not see him until he called out to them to surrender."

"Instantly they fired, and he raised both arms together, a pistol in each hand, and returned the fire with deadly aim, for the two men behind the one who bore me in his arms dropped dead, a bullet in the forehead of each."

"Bravo! a dead shot he was and a brave fellow to face the three."

"He then sprung upon my kidnapper, father, dragged me from his grasp, and hurled the man to the floor with a force that nearly stunned him, while he pressed his foot upon his neck, jerked down the bell cord within reach of his hand and securely bound his prisoner."

"As the servants were around and coming to the scene he told one he would seek a constable and so left."

"He went to the jail, secured officers, but did not return with them, and the whole town was mystified as to who my brave rescuer was."

"And you do not know, my child?"

"Yes, sir, I know now: but he told the officers

that the men had a craft anchored off-shore, and they captured it, though the man left in charge escaped."

"But who was he?"

"Well, father, it was a young man of whom I heard you speak years ago."

"Then I know him?"

"I think not, sir, though you did know his father, as he was the Lieutenant Cassiday who saved your crew in the Bahamas, when your brig foundered, you re—"

"My God! it was Claude Cassiday's son!" and the commodore gritted his teeth hard together.

"Yes, sir, the young man who was once a buccaneer by force of circumstances under Kent the Buccaneer, but was appointed to the navy and had some trouble, you remember, which ended in a fatal duel, because he was so imposed upon by the others and called the Buccaneer Midshipman."

"He was tried for the duel he fought and ordered on a long cruise, and then was dismissed for stealing, a crime I am sure he is innocent of."

"He went before the mast then, kept away from home, for his widowed mother and young sister lived in Boston, until he paid back every dollar he was accused of taking."

"Then he came home to his mother and found that she had lost her savings, mortgaged her home and moved to New York."

"It was while at his deserted home that he saw the kidnappers, overheard their plot against me and followed them to the mansion."

"He would not let himself be known, but the Gypsy fortune-teller Wo-ton-ka saw him and told who my rescuers were, so the paper had the whole story, and here it is, while it was cruel to write him down as buccaneer and rogue, as it has."

"Determined to see you, we started on the packet schooner, to find him on board, coming to New York to see his mother and sister, and he had hidden from the gaze of every one and avoided me persistently; but had he not been on board, our vessel would have been lost."

"Now, father, you know all, and that young man you can help, only do not let him suspect it comes from you, as he would accept no favor for what he has done."

"He is poor, and with all the charges against him, he is proud, while the paper has told his whole story in a most cruel manner."

"But, father, how distressed you look."

"I am distressed," groaned the commodore, and the phantoms of the past haunted him but the more, for now he owed to young Claude Cassiday, whom he had robbed of his legacy, more than he could ever repay.

But at last he said:

"Celeste, my child, I will do all in my power for that young man."

"Heaven will bless you, my dear, good papa," said Celeste, and her words made him wince as though from a knife-thrust, for his conscience told him that he deserved curses rather than blessings, that his life was shadowed by a blacker cloud even than the unfortunate young sailor who had been dismissed from the service in which he was so rapidly mounting the ladder of fame.

CHAPTER III.

THE ILL-OMINED NAME.

A WOMAN with the look of an invalid sat in an easy-chair, in the front room overlooking the beautiful East River, and on up through the then wild waters of Hell Gate, now, under the hand of science, no longer holding terror for the mariner.

The face of the woman was refined and stamped with traces of beauty toned down by an expression of sadness.

She was neatly, but plainly dressed, and her eyes were fixed upon the scene visible from the window.

Her face brightened as she saw two persons entering the gateway leading to the cottage where she dwelt.

One was a tall, splendidly formed young man with great massive shoulders, an erect bearing and graceful in every movement, while his physique indicated great strength and agility.

His face was cast in a stern mold for one of his youthful years, and a resolute, fearless one as well, while his features were as nearly perfect as the human countenance can be made.

A look of sadness haunted his eyes, though now his face was brightened by a smile as he spoke to his companion, whose close resemblance to him indicated near kinship.

A young girl of graceful form, her face was lovely in expression, soulful and truly good, though there was the same dash and daring about it that could be seen in her brother.

The latter was dressed in a sailor suit, and his bronzed complexion showed that he had long sailed the blue waves.

Entering the room where the invalid sat, the young man and girl both kissed her affectionately and the former said:

"Now, mother, you will soon be yourself again, for the change of air the doctor prescribed you shall now have, for we start almost at once upon our voyage northward."

"Tell me all about it, my son," said the lady, brightening up perceptibly.

"Well, mother, I told you of my despair only in part, but now that good fortune is in our grasp I do not mind telling you all that I have kept from you."

"You were so good, Claude, for until Helen told me to-day that you had been fighting adversity so desperately I did not suspect it, for you led me to believe you had money in plenty."

"I had not one dollar to keep friendship with another one, mother."

"I came back as you know with enough to pay that debt to Mrs. Varney, with interest in full, and that left me but little over."

"Wo-ton-ka, that Woman of Mystery, told me you had come to New York to get work, that all your money invested had been lost, that you had mortgaged the little home and it was to be sold out."

"Of course I could get nothing to do, known as Claude Cassiday the Ex-Pirate, and then as the robber of a widow whose dying husband intrusted money for her to my keeping."

"The paper had the whole story and I found I bore an ill-omened name."

"Then came my rescue of Miss Hartwell, and my meeting her upon the packet-schooner; but of course I would take no reward."

"Wo-ton-ka, the Witch, bought up that mortgage on the house from old Gripstein the money-lender, and that made me feel that your cottage and belongings were safe."

"But whenever I sought work here and told my name I was refused."

"Then came a chance with one firm, and I found out that Commodore Hartwell had instigated it and was a partner, so I refused the splendid ship offered me for it only meant pay for my services to Miss Hartwell."

"Then I took the place of mate on the packet schooner, I had saved, the night her captain was buried, and it lasted a month, when I was discharged because, as *Claude Cassiday* the disgraced officer, I was doing an injury to the trade of the vessel."

"I again tried here, but without avail."

"You became ill and I could help you only until our money gave out."

"I was in despair, for my name was my ruin."

"Then an idea seized upon me to change it."

"Change your name, Claude?" reproachfully said the mother.

"In part, mother, for as I had three names, I dropped that of Cassiday and determined to be simply Claude Searle."

"It brought me luck, it seems, for that night I stood on the wharves almost in despair, watching the flagship come in."

"She dropped anchor, a boat came ashore, and an officer enveloped in a cloak landed."

"The boat started back and as the officer came along in the darkness and mist, I saw by the street lamp two men spring out upon him."

"I went to his aid and captured both men, though the officer had been wounded I found, and, but for me would have been killed."

"I hailed the boat, as he recognized the assassins as two of his crew who had deserted when he was in port some months ago, and who had sworn to kill him."

"He sent them off to the ship and I helped him to his hotel, when a physician was sent for and his wound was dressed."

"He asked me my name and said he would get me an appointment in the navy."

"This I of course refused, and I gave my name in part only, as Claude Searle."

"Had I said Claude Searle Cassiday he would have known me, as I did him, for it was *Commodore Harold Hartwell*!"

"Your dear father's friend, who was with him when he died in Mexico, and brought me his last loving words," said Mrs. Cassiday.

"Well, mother, had he known me as Claude Cassiday, the disgraced officer, the rescuer of his daughter from the kidnappers, I would not have accepted a favor at his hands."

"But he knew me only as Claude Searle, and in my despair I told him I would accept the position he offered, and all is arranged."

"And that position, my son?"

"The commodore bought, some years ago, from a brother officer, a grand old estate on the coast of Maine."

"There are thousands of acres, and a fine old mansion, which for years has been given up to the spooks."

"The place is known as Hermitage Hall, and was built by an exiled French nobleman years ago."

"The estate has been under an overseer, it seems, who had defrauded the commodore, and so he made the offer to me to go and take full management."

"I told him of you and Helen, and he said so much the better, for the place would be better kept for your presence there."

"There are a number of tenants, and a yacht, he says, with a craft to take the produce to the markets."

"Then there are horses and cattle, and all we can wish for."

"The pay is most liberal, besides a percentage on all sales, and then we will be able to hide from this cruel world, mother, and live in peace."

and contentment, saving up money to redeem your home, and for me to one day prove my innocence of the crime that overshadows my whole life, for some day it shall be done; one day I will have retribution for all that I have suffered," and the young sailor spoke fiercely in his anger.

But he became calm at once, and resumed:

"So it is arranged, mother, for us to sail tomorrow, in a brig bound to the Kennebec, where we can hail a coaster to take us to Hermitage Hall."

"The commodore gave me money for expenses, and now, you see, the future looms up brightly for Claude Searle, be it ever so black for Claude Cassiday."

"I had hoped for a vessel, mother, but never mind, I will be content ashore, with a yacht at my service for sails when we wish a run out to sea and back."

"Helen will be happy there, for she will have plenty to do, and there is a fine library in the mansion, the commodore says, while you will grow strong and well again, for we will no longer be haunted by the ill-omened name of Cassiday—at least not until it is cleared of the dishonor now resting upon it."

CHAPTER IV.

A HIDDEN PURPOSE.

A MAN stood watching the departure of the merchant brig, which bore Claude Cassiday, his mother and sister, away from New York, as though he felt the deepest interest in the going of the vessel, or some one on board.

He was enveloped in a cloak, wore a slouch hat pulled down over his eyes, and appeared like one who wished to avoid attention.

As the brig swung clear of her wharf, and sail after sail was set, she stood away down the harbor at a fair speed.

Then the man gave a sigh, seemingly of relief, and walked rapidly away from the spot where he had stood, half concealed by piles of freight.

He made his way rapidly along until he reached the fashionable hotel of the town, at that period, and entering it, went to his room.

As he threw off his cloak and hat, the face and form of Commodore Harold Hartwell were revealed.

"At last I have purchased surcease from dread, I sincerely hope," he said as he threw himself into a chair, a sigh of evident relief coming from his lips.

"No, he did not recognize in Commodore Harold Hartwell the *Captain Harold* who had gone in search of the treasure, whom he had aided to escape, and who twice had treated him so cruelly.

"Yes, three times have I treated him with cruelty, for I kept from him his legacy, and to-day hold his fortune."

"I knew him at a glance, for his face has changed no more than the years from boyhood to manhood have brought to it."

"He is proud, for he refused the offer of master of the best merchant craft afloat, when he knew that I had offered it."

"My partner was a fool to tell him I had aught to do with it, for he took it at once as pay for the services he had rendered me in saving Celeste from being kidnapped."

"Now he turns up as the savior of my life, for those two murderous sailors would have killed me but for him."

"And he has changed his name too."

"I can understand that, for the one he bore seems accursed, as bearing it he could get no employment."

"As Claude Searle, needing aid most painfully for his mother and sister, he was willing to accept a place I offered, though only that he could earn his pay."

"He did not believe that I knew him as Claude Cassiday, so was content to accept the position I had to offer him, and he will serve me well."

"If I gave him a large salary, it is his just due, for does it not come from money justly his own?"

"Well, he is safe now, out of my way, and I shall endeavor to keep him there."

"Were I alone, I would confess all and give him his fortune; but no, I will not rob my child, my beautiful Celeste, for she must have it."

"No, no, he can be contented there, as can also his mother and sister."

"As he has met me and fails to recognize in me Captain Harold the Treasure-Hunter of the Bahamas, I am safe, and thank Heaven for it."

So mused the commodore, who for years had borne in his heart a skeleton to curse his life, to rattle its bones in his waking and dreaming hours.

Several weeks after the sailing of the brig in which the Cassidays took passage, the flagship departed from New York, and after a cruise, touching at several ports, put into Boston Bay.

She swept up by the forts and dropped anchor off the city just at sunset, and the commodore found Celeste ashore awaiting him in the carriage, for the vessel had been seen from the piazza of Overlook Manor and recognized.

The commodore seemed glad to be again at home, cast the mail awaiting him aside for later attention, and sat down to a late dinner with Celeste and her governess.

During the dinner Miss Du Vale asked:

"Commodore, have you ever heard more of that splendid young sailor, Cassiday, to whom Celeste and I owe such a debt of gratitude?"

The darkly bronzed skin of the commodore prevented the flush from being seen that swept over his face as he replied:

"You mean Claude Cassiday, Miss Du Vale?"

"Yes, sir, for neither Celeste or I can learn what became of him after he gave up his mate's position on the packet-schooner."

"I got him the berth of master of a splendid ship in the China trade, and of which I am half owner, but he refused it, not wishing to be paid for his services, and soon after disappeared, as no inquiry of mine could find him, for I was anxious in some way to prove my appreciation of all he had done for me and mine."

"I believe, sir, that he is the victim of a conspiracy, and has been cruelly maligned, for, in my mind, he is no more guilty of the crime charged upon him than I am."

"I think he must be innocent, Miss Du Vale, as he is a man who appears above a dishonorable act."

"If he could only prove his innocence," said Celeste.

"That will be hard to do, I fear; but he has disappeared most mysteriously, he and his mother and sister, for all of our efforts to find them have been useless," Miss Du Vale said.

Then the conversation turned upon the attempted assassination of the commodore, and his rescue by a young sailor, when Celeste said:

"I am glad indeed, father, that you were able to do something for that young man, as you wrote me you had."

"Yes, I gave him a berth he can keep as long as he pleases," was the answer, and the commodore changed the subject.

Soon after they left the table, and when the ladies had retired for the night the commodore turned to his letters.

There was one that interested him more than the others.

This one was dated at "Hermitage Hall" and read:

"I desire to report, sir, that all goes well on your estate, and I am getting the lands into good shape, so that you may expect good paying crops."

"There is trouble along the coast from a smuggler band under a leader known as Black Brandt, but their lawlessness does not affect our people, and will not unless they turn to piracy, a contingency I am preparing against by drilling a crew for the yacht, from the fishermen on the coast, and your tenants and I would like permission to arm our little craft, if you will obtain it and forward me a couple of guns; but of course this is only a suggestion for you to act upon, sir, as you deem best."

The commodore paused here and muttered:

"Yes, it would be just like Mr. Claude Searle Cassiday to capture Black Brandt and his crew, so I will send him the guns and get the permit he asks, for it will keep him there, *out of my way*."

CHAPTER V.

THE PIRATE AND THE JEW.

MOSES GRIPTSTEIN was a money-making man.

He had a shop in Boston, in a secluded quarter of the town, yet not two secluded not to be found when needed.

He was reported to be very rich, a lover of large interests in loans, yet a square, honorable business man, and his word was as good as his note among merchants.

His shop was a curiosity, for therein would be found almost any thing one was in search of.

They were purchased second-hand of course, and for a bargain; but a house could be fitted out there from a palace to a cabin, and jewels galore shone in his show-cases.

There was a private entrance into the shop from the rear, and this led also to his spacious home above stairs.

There he dwelt in princely magnificence with his two children, Emanuel, who managed the business, and Zaphiel, though the two were supposed to be only distant in kinship to him, and called him uncle.

The truth was, Moses Gripstein had been a conspirator in Poland, was sent to Siberia, made his escape and married a Christian girl, an American, but kept this marriage from his people, and only lately had let his children know the secret he withheld from the world.

Having given up the idea of freeing Poland, he had turned all his energies to money-making, and with marked success.

If he had any shady transactions even his handsome son Emanuel did not know the fact, and his beautiful daughter Zaphiel never suspected it.

It was said that Moses Gripstein knew the financial standing of every one in Boston, and held pledges from many wealthy people as collateral for money loaned.

What his secret deeds were the reader may have an opportunity to know by a glance behind the curtain at his inner life.

A majestic-looking man, he held that majesty when speaking in his own language, but dropped from it when conversing in English, so remarkably funny was his accent and so quaint his expressions.

As he was seated in his up-stairs office, or library, where he was wont to pass his evenings, and to go over his earnings of the day, looking over Emanuel's accounts and cash, Zaphiel entered the room and said that a man wished to see him.

"Who vas he?"

"He is a sailor, uncle."

"Vell, I don't vas like sailor mans comes here and maybe robs me."

"Uncle, I will tell you frankly that I penetrated his disguise, for he is the gentleman you have had dealings with before—Mr. Claude Kenton."

"Aha! vell I sees him at vonce; but, Zaphiel?"

"Yes, uncle!"

"Vy vas it you vas always meets Mr. Kenton'ven he comes?"

"You don't vas let other mans in."

"An accident, I guess, uncle, for I was in the hallway when he knocked."

"Vell, I don't like it, for he vas not a man v'at I likes you to know."

"You said that he was your friend, uncle."

"Vell, vell, show him into t'e rooms."

Zaphiel certainly deserved the reputation of being very beautiful, for she was indeed perfection in form and feature.

She dressed exquisitely, wearing no jewels with many at her command, and was wont to create a sensation when she drove out in her carriage, or rode horseback with her brother; but from every one she seemed to hold aloof.

A moment after retiring she returned with a man in sailor costume, and heavily bearded.

When the door closed behind him he threw off a wig and a false beard that he wore and dropped into an easy-chair while he said pleasantly:

"Good-evening, chief!"

His face was a study of manliness, recklessness, beauty and deviltry, good and evil.

His form was that of a man possessing a perfect physique, and his bearing courtly and yet free and easy, with a spirit of dash about it.

"Vell, captain, I did not expect to see you so soon."

"I came to have a talk with you, chief, and see how you liked my management of affairs?"

"Dey vas splendid, my fri'nt, so splendid, for you hav monish for yourself!"

"And for you, Moses."

"Vell, yes; but I know dere vas big monish in t'e smuggling pizziness, v'en I vas ask you to stop being Kent t'e Buccaneer mit a ropes apout your necks, and become a smuggler captain."

"Don't you vas glad I vas save your lives, mine fri'nt?"

"Ah! you put it in that light do you, Mr. Gripstein?"

"Well, so be it. I accept it as best pleases you, for I did meet with misfortune after misfortune after that boy captive of mine, Claude Cassiday, brought the hounds of war down upon my stronghold, and you helped me out when I came to you."

"I did wish you to fit out a splendid war craft for me, over which I could again raise my scarlet wings flag and stick to piracy; but you suggested smuggling as safer and a better money-making business, so I agreed, and I am glad that you are satisfied thus far."

"I vas, I vas; but dey tells me you vas kilt t'e two officers who vas dere v'en you takes command."

"Ahl you have spies in camp, I see; but it matters not, for here is my report in full, and you'll find that I confess to the killing."

"The two men were rivals for the leadership of the band, and each had his followers."

"I arrived with my craft, and put in my claim, simply stating that I would fight the two of them and the survivor of the three should be captain."

"All the men liked the proposition, and I happened to be the survivor."

"You vas cool apout it, captains."

"Why get flurried, Moses? but no one knows you as chief, so you are safe, and I have dodged the cutters well, our retreat is a secure hiding place, my craft meets the incoming vessels that have smuggled goods for us, and I have forwarded to your agent here in town a lot of plunder that never paid duty."

"The truth is I rather like the life, though, of course, I miss the combat at sea, which I enjoyed as Kent the Buccaneer, though there is considerable excitement in dodging the sea hounds as Black Brandt the Smuggler."

"Vell you vas a prave mans, captains, and if you vas not turn pirats you vas peen a great mans."

"Thanks, Moses, for the compliment such as it is, and if you were not a rascal you would not be rich as you are by half; but I have something to tell you of importance."

"Vell, I vas all ears, mine fri'nt," responded the Jew, eagerly.

CHAPTER VI.

BLACK BRANDT'S PLOT.

"HAVE you heard of anything exciting having happened of late, Mr. Gripstein?" asked the man who had made his name famous as Kent the Buccaneer, and then gave up piracy when supposed to be dead, for smuggling.

"Vell, I hears apout t'e kidnapping of Mees Hartvells, vich vas pretty pad."

"That is it, for that was my plot."

"Your plots?" asked the Jew in amazement.

"Yes; I decided that it was an easy way of raking in quite a fortune in ransom money, and sent four men in a fishing smack to carry out my plans."

"Mine gracious gootness!"

"You know Commodore Hartwell is a very rich man, his daughter being the richest heiress in the country, it is said, and I decided if we could get possession of her, her father would pay big money for her ransom."

"Dot vas so, put it makes heaps of troubles."

"That is just it, for the man I sent bungled the affair."

"Two of his men got killed, and I am glad of it, and one escaped."

"The leader vas in prisons?"

"Yes, and must be gotten out, or he might tell ugly stories, for he knows me as the one-time Kent the Buccaneer, and I desire to be dead to the world just now."

"Vell, how vas he to get outs?"

"You must do that."

"I vas to gets him oud!"

"Yes, for it is to your interest as well as mine."

"He bungled the affair, for he should have seen that he was not followed, as he was by that young sailor Cassiday, who always turns up to thwart me."

"Vell, he vas on hand, dot vas so."

"Yes, and I have a grudge against him I will some day settle."

"I will tell you now that I was engaged to his mother, who as Helen Marcy was a beautiful girl twenty odd years ago, when I was a young naval officer, though I fear a sad scamp."

"Dat vas so."

"She married Cassiday, casting me off, and I took to piracy, and all here know that Kent Curtis of the long ago, developed into Kent the Buccaneer."

"When I picked up in an open boat at sea the boy Claude Cassiday, and he told me who he was, I determined to make a pirate of him, thus getting my revenge."

"He did serve me as a junior officer for a long time, was at my stronghold also, and yet in the end ruined me, as you know."

"Now he is in disgrace, and though I hate him of course, I would fling the lie in the teeth of any man who told me he was guilty of the crime he is charged with."

"Now you know he thwarted my plot of kidnapping Miss Hartwell, and he has now gone to sea, I believe; but some day he will return."

"For the present I must give up the plot, as I will have a better chance, as I learn that Commodore Hartwell has placed a new overseer over his estate on the coast, some leagues from my retreat, and the place is being fitted up, doubtless for the owner and his daughter to spend some time."

"Then it will be easy enough for me to kidnap her."

"You don't vas hurt t'e pretty ladys."

"No, and there is where my men overstepped their orders, for they felled the governess, and but for the coming of Cassiday she would have died under the drug they saturated a towel with and threw over her face while she was unconscious from the blow."

"This angered me, for I never war upon a woman, to harm her; then too they were rude toward Miss Hartwell, and but for the fact that this fellow in prison demands of me his release, and he must be set free."

"Now you know the situation, and what brings me here."

"But how vas I to get him oud, mine fri'nt?"

"That you must decide upon, for I must get back to my vessel, which is in the bay."

"In t'e pay?" almost shrieked the Jew.

"Oh yes, why not?" was the cool query.

"You vill be taken and hanged up quick."

"I thought you told me, offered it as a bait in fact, for me to turn smuggler, that they would not hang me for smuggling?"

"Vell, dat vas so; but you vas lose t'e vessels, and, oh! so mooch monish."

"No, there is not a craft afloat that can catch the Evil Spirit, and I wear an amulet given me by Wo-ton-ka the Witch that will protect me."

"You vas believe in t'e vicher womans?"

"Yes, to a certain extent I do, for I confess to being a trifle superstitious, and I have had a test of her wonderful powers."

"So vas I."

"You, Moses?" asked the smuggler, in amazement.

"Yes, I vas."

"How was that, may I ask?"

"Vell, I have t'e mortgage on t'e Cassiday cottage, and as t'e interest vas not paid, and

t'e time vas up t'e next day, I vas t'ink I ha'f it all for minself, v'en the vicher womans leaves a notes for me to coome dat night ant see her, if I vants some monish."

"And you went?"

"Vell I did."

"The longing for money makes you brave, Moses."

"Vell, I vas prave v'en I vent, but pretty scared v'en I comes avay."

"Aha!"

"She tells me dere vas t'e monish to cancel t'e Cassiday mortgage and interest, and to write a receipt out in full, to send her t'e papers next day."

"I vas mad, and refuse, and tell her I don't do pizziness dat vay; but she say she means pizziness herself, and t'e dog she haf howl at me, t'e plack pird he croaks, t'e parrots he cusses at me, and t'e cats dey vas get dere packs up awful, so I vas do as she dell me and leaves pretty quick—why you laughs so funny, mine fri'nt?" and the Jew turned to the smuggler who was convulsed with laughter.

"It must have been funny, Moses, and I only wish I could have seen you that night."

"It vas t'e nights v'en t'e kidnappers come for Miss Hartwells."

"Ah! that was the night, was it?"

"Well, you see to it that my man escapes, and he will join me up at the retreat."

"Now I must be off, for I landed near the cabin of the witch, and wish to see her before I return to my vessel."

"Do not be alarmed for the safety of the craft, for I shall not get her into trouble I cannot extricate her from."

"Now good-night, and send any instructions as before, and I will notify you of any changes to be made."

"I will also have a look at Hermitage Hall and learn just what the commodore intends doing, and if he has an overseer whom I can get into my pay as his former agent was in the pay of my predecessor as captain."

"Good-night, Moses," and the smuggler captain resumed his disguise and leaving the home of the Jew wended his way toward the cabin of Wo-ton-ka, the Woman of Mystery.

CHAPTER VII.

AT HERMITAGE HALL.

HERMITAGE HALL had been built in the good old days when a man's house was his castle, and hospitality was unbounded.

Coming into exile in the new land of America, from a castle in France, the builder of Hermitage Hall had erected a mansion of stone to his own tastes, its building being a panacea to his sorrows of being a fugitive from La Belle France.

There was a vast hall, long, broad corridors, scores of rooms, a sub-basement, two full stories and an attic, with wings, turrets and the widest of piazzas here and there.

Spacious grounds, ornamental gardens, a kitchen garden in the rear and any number of tenants' cabins with stables and barns, all of stone.

A man of wealth, he had enjoyed beautifying his new home.

Thousands of acres surrounded the mansion, and it fronted up on a small bay opening into the ocean, which it overlooked from its exalted site upon a lofty cliff.

The furniture was lavish, and had the place been turned into a modern apartment house, there was room for a dozen large families within its walls,

There were vehicles of numerous designs in the stables, with horses to draw them, boats and a yacht, all of which Commodore Hartwell had purchased for a sum in cash from the heir, who preferred the money to the estate which really he had never seen.

The commodore had sailed there with Celeste and her governess, along with his attorney, to look up the titles, and his daughter had gone into such ecstasies over the old place that he had paid the really small figure demanded for it and placed an overseer in charge.

That agent had persistently robbed the commodore, and connected himself with some very shady transactions, the result of which he had been summarily dismissed just at the time that Claude Cassiday was in search of a situation.

The brig which carried the young sailor, his mother and sister to their new home, along with their few belongings, had signaled a coaster and placed them on board a few leagues off Sequin Island.

This coaster, for a consideration, had run into Hermitage Harbor and landed them upon the little wharf, and sailing away had left them like strangers in a strange land.

But Claude was not long in making friends with the sojourners upon the estate and letting them know who he was, that he was Mr. Searle, the new overseer, and there by authority of Commodore Hartwell.

The sweet, sad face of Mrs. Hartwell, the beauty of Helen and manliness of Claude at once won favor, and they were taken up to the hall, which was thrown open and aired for them to take their choice of rooms.

"These rooms overlooking the sea, mother,

I think you will like," Claude had said, and they were also the choice of both Mrs. Cassiday and Helen.

The kitchens were just beneath in that wing, and they had a sitting-room, library, bedrooms and a chamber opening into the grand dining-room where they could have their meals.

The gardener was ready to look to their welfare and his wife to act as cook, and none better could they have cared for.

With a map of the estate Claude's first duty was to find its outlines, and the people who worked upon it, sharing with the commodore.

There were half-farmer, half-fishermen and at odd times lumbermen, getting timber for the building of ships at the seaports.

A hardy, fearless set they were, with the skill of seamen and ever ready for service afloat or ashore.

Making himself acquainted with the people Claude found an easy task, for instinctively they recognized in him nerve, kindness and worth, while Mrs. Searle, as I must now call her, and Helen, completely won their hearts before they had been two weeks at the Hall.

Viewing the history of the hall from its building, strange stories were told of the orgies held there, that tragedies of the darkest dye had been enacted in its walls, and that at one time it was the haunt of pirates who had kept their lawless booty hidden away in its spacious cellars.

That it was haunted the good country folk honestly believed and persistently vowed and many a tale of horror was told and vouched for of spooks seen by night, wild shrieks and laughter heard from evil spirits and ghosts meandering about the piazzas and grounds.

The last overseer had refused to live under the roof, and had dwelt in one of the tenants' cabins.

Yet for all this the Searles had fearlessly made their home there, despising spooks and goblins, and this alone had raised the admiration of the country people for their courage.

After learning his boundaries, Claude had numbered the people, estimated the value of their products per year, from land sea and forest and thus obtained an idea of what the estate should bring in clear profit to the commodore.

What he discovered was that the former agent had cheated the owner and the tenants too of more than half their profits.

The yacht found there at anchor in the harbor was a pretty craft, graceful in outline, stanch and roomy.

She was of sloop build, and numbered some forty tons, while she was in terrible condition.

Claude at once had her hauled out upon the ways, sent to Bath for rigging and sails, as the commodore had bidden him do, and taking his own ideas decided that the speed of the vessel could be increased by making her into a schooner rig.

He selected her spars himself and took the greatest interest in her equipment, while he selected a crew of lads from fourteen to seventy, and drilled them to suit himself.

There was also a drudge boat in the harbor, surf skiffs, whale boats and all else needed, and all were put in condition, while Claude passed what time he could in learning the coast under the most skillful pilots that dwelt along the shores, and they found him an apt pupil too.

To do her share Helen had begun a morning school for the children, a blessing which the parents greatly prized, and Mrs. Searle devoted herself to the care of the home, putting away preserves and all else that she could do to make herself useful.

Such was the situation at Hermitage Hall when the yacht, Sea Cloud, came out under her schooner rig, with a crew of twenty gallant lads, two small cannon, and Claude Searle as captain.

And it was just at this time that Black Brandt, the smuggler, had sailed for Boston to have an interview with his secret chief, the Jew money-lender.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WARNING.

SITUATED upon the summit of a rocky spur, or cliff, overlooking Boston Harbor and Bay, and hidden away among a thick growth of pines, was a stout log cabin, the home of Wo-ton-ka, the Witch.

The place had an unenviable reputation, as the former dweller there had been murdered for his money, and no one had cared to visit the spot when left to desertion.

But, suddenly, it had found an occupant, and it was a woman.

She had fitted the place up, had a piazza put along the front, an arbor built over the spring to one side, and in fact made the little cabin quite home-like.

The woman, coming from no one knew where, was as much avoided as had been the ghosts that were said to haunt the place.

She had come there to dwell, erected a flag-staff over the house, upon which ever floated a flag, yet each day's ensign seeming to vary, for all had different colors and strange devices,

apparently according to the humor of Wo-ton-ka, The Woman of Mystery.

She had come there bag and baggage, bringing with her strange belongings, and a stranger family, for her favorite seat was an easy-chair of human bones, with skeleton hands upon either arm, skeleton feet and skulls upon the top.

The footstool was a large skull, and a black velvet pall was thrown across the chair carelessly.

But the family?

It consisted of a pair of enormous cats, one snow-white, the other jet-black, a raven with its claws painted red, and a beautiful parrot.

These two rested upon the skulls on the back of the bone chair, and, besides, there was a Siberian bloodhound of great size, and fierce-looking as a tiger, his neck encircled by a collar of brass, studded with nails.

And the mistress of this strange family?

A woman whose age it was hard to tell.

She might be, as she really looked, several years under thirty, and perhaps over two-score.

She was beautiful in face and form, and of a dark type that looked as though she might be a Mexican.

She dressed in deep black, and her dark, brilliantly beautiful face showed no trace of what was in heart or brain.

She was called a fortune-teller, a Gypsy, a witch, and at all times a Woman of Mystery.

She harmed no one, paid liberally for what she wished for her own comfort, aided the sick and poor, and was dreaded by all, though not hated, despised or persecuted.

It was to this woman that Black Brandt made his way after leaving the house of the Jew.

A light burned within her cabin, and a flag fluttered above on the staff, but it could not be recognized in the darkness.

A growl within showed that the outlaw's coming was known at least to the dog, and, stepping upon the piazza, he knocked.

"Come in, Black Brandt," called out a shrill voice.

The outlaw obeyed, and, as he entered, he said, sternly.

"How did that accursed bird know me?"

The woman sat at a table, reading by the light of a lamp swung over her head.

She laughed lightly at the smuggler's question, and responded:

"I was waiting for you. Be seated."

"I cannot believe that you were."

"Then have the flag down that flies above the cabin and see."

The man stepped to the staff, which went up through the roof, drew upon one rope which raised a trap, having an aperture, and seizing the halliards drew the flag through into the cabin.

It was a green field with a red figure of Mephisto in the center.

"My God! my own flag of the Evil Spirit," cried Black Brandt, as he held the colors up before the eyes of the Woman of Mystery.

"Did I not tell you that you were expected?" asked Wo-ton-ka.

"But, how did you know?" asked Brandt.

"It is given to me to see deeper into life and darkness than the eye of ordinary man and woman."

"I can about believe it, woman, for when I first came to you, you knew me as Kent the Buccaneer."

"By Neptune! but you are converting me into the belief that there are such things as witches, spooks, and evil spirits on earth."

"But prove your uncanny powers still more by telling me if I have kept the pledge I made you to slay not my fellow-man?"

"You still wear my amulet, and that is proof."

"Then I have taken no life since I saw you last?"

"I said not so, nor was such the compact."

"You were to cease piracy, to give up killing for plunder, and you have done so; but to prove yourself the master of your lawless band you have taken life."

"Ah! how often?"

"Twice."

"By heaven, but you read aright, and I would know why the amulet has not given me success in all things."

"Because you sought, through others, to drag from her home an innocent, beautiful girl, and would have taken life to carry out your purpose."

"You were thwarted because you sought to win gold through a young girl's terrors."

"You know this?" asked the smuggler in amazement.

"I do."

"I mean, do you know that I plotted that kidnapping?"

"I do, and I warn you now, Black Brandt, that such plots to gain gold through the fears of the innocent and helpless will come to naught."

"Your lawless career as a smuggler hurts the Government only, but when you strike at a woman, to get ransom, you shall meet only failure, and that moment that you do, the amulet I

placed about your neck shall lose its charm, and your heart, your life, is no longer protected from steel or bullet."

"I can hardly believe it."

"Then try it."

"By heaven, but I have a mind to this very night, for I am here in a city where many know me, where fortunes are offered for my head, or were, until I was believed to have gone down with my ship."

"I have a mind to cast off my disguise, go to the house of Commodore Hartwell, seize his daughter and bear her away to my boat, thence to my vessel, a mile distant, and run the gantlet out to sea, just to test your amulet's powers?"

"I have warned you, Black Brandt, so go and put my words to the test," said the woman sternly, and the man started as he heard the shrilly spoken words:

"Heaven help him!"

"That accursed bird again," and the smuggler muttered a deep imprecation against the parrot, which laughed defiantly at him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EVIL SPIRIT.

It was evident that the smuggler captain was impressed by the warning of the woman, and its echo by the parrot.

He paced the floor several times, as though upon the quarter-deck of his ship, and then stopping suddenly before the Witch, asked sternly:

"Tell me where we have met before?"

"Have we met before?" she inquired quietly.

"You know that I do not refer to our last meeting."

"When did we meet ere that?"

"That is what I would know."

"You never before met Wo-ton-ka, the Witch," she answered, impressively.

"It seems to me that I have, and yet I cannot place you."

"Had we not met before, how would you have known me as Kent the Buccaneer?"

"That is my power, sir; but this is foreign to the subject, and I would know if you intend to heed my warning?"

"You are a man, and you have made it your boast never to war against a woman, so why should you do so now?"

"I mean her no harm, only to recover a ransom."

"Is it no harm to her to feel that she is in the power of Black Brandt the Smuggler?"

"No, let the girl alone, else you will bring upon yourself dangers the amulet you wear can never protect you from."

"Is it in your heart to promise, and then deceive me about her?"

The smuggler started, for the woman seemed to read his very thoughts as he was meditating just what she spoke of.

At last he spoke and said:

"Well, I will drop the idea, for I am making money fast enough as it is."

"You are wise."

"Now tell me how much I owe you?"

"Nothing."

"So you said before."

"So I say again."

"But you take the gold of others?"

"Yes."

"Why do you refuse mine?"

"It is gained in sin."

"Ha! that is your reason then?"

"Yes, in part."

"All gold is crime-stained, for when one may give it in charity, another may have gained it by theft."

"It builds churches, but prisons as well, and brothels, and buys vice as well as virtue."

"Bah! the gold I have is only on a par with all other?"

"Except that it comes into your own hand by an act of crime."

"No, I neither need nor will take your gold, Black Brandt, so go your way now and heed my warning."

"Your vessel lies in the greatest danger should a calm come and catch you here, so sail while you have the breeze."

Her words seemed to impress him quickly, for well he knew that should a calm fall he would lose his vessel, his crew, perhaps his own life.

So he hastily bade the woman good-night, adding as he turned toward the door:

"I will see you again ere long, Wo-ton-ka."

"I am always here," she answered, and he strode away in the darkness.

He passed the deserted home of the Cassidays and paused a moment, while he muttered:

"And there she lived so long, the only woman I ever loved and yet seek revenge upon."

"I verily believe did she say she would forgive my crimes I would to-day give up my evil life for her sake."

"But she scorned me when last we met, and I am revengeful."

"But where is she now, and that daring son of hers, to whom I owe my downfall."

"Yet he did only his duty, for he was no pirate at heart, only through force of circumstances he could not control."

"They say that she has a daughter as beautiful as she once was."

"Well, I mark all for my revenge."

With a wave of the hand toward the deserted cottage he passed on down the path leading from the ridge to the shore.

His boat was there, drawn upon the beach, but with a strength that was remarkable he ran it back into the water and springing in rowed out toward a vessel lying a couple of cable lengths away.

As he neared the vessel he saw that all was alert on board.

No light was visible, but the anchor lay upon the bottom just enough to hold the vessel, the sails were ready to run up in an instant, and the officer on watch hailed in a low tone:

"Boat ahoy! who comes?"

"Evil Spirit," said the smuggler chief and from the other came the response:

"Ay ay, sir!"

The boat ran alongside, was hauled up to her davits and Black Brandt gave the orders to get under way at once.

Entering his cabin he threw aside his disguise and soon came on deck dressed in deep black, and with a sable mask concealing the upper part of his face, and this he wore at all times before his crew, for he knew well that an air of mystery aided him greatly in his management of the wild lot of men who formed his crew.

When he reached the deck the vessel was gliding along under lower sails, which had been set without the creaking of a block, so thoroughly was all on board kept in order for secrecy and silence.

The craft was a beautiful one, hull, spars and sails being painted jet black, so she appeared like night itself running along over the waters.

A more beautiful model could not have been found, and she was very long and narrow, cutting through the waters so easily as to leave no wake.

A peculiarity of the craft was at once visible, for she had *three masts*.

They were tall, raking and gave a good spread of sail between fore and main and main and mizzen-mast, while the latter set a vast area of canvas.

The topsails were also of giant size, the stay-sails, jibs and every bit of canvas she spread, was upon the same liberal scale.

A crew of a score or more of men were visible upon her decks, with two officers besides the smuggler captain, and yet not a gun or weapon could be seen.

The crew were dressed in a black sailor suit, skull-caps and canvas shoes, so that they moved about the decks as noiselessly as cats.

Taking the helm himself Captain Brandt stood across the harbor until he came in front of the lights of the town, when he reached the outbound channel and coolly headed seaward.

Passing the castle, then a fortress, he was hailed loudly, the watch evidently not seeing the black craft until she had nearly glided by:

"Ahoy! ship ahoy!"

"Ay ay, sir," answered the chief in a voice that had a stirring ring to it.

It was not customary to bring to an outward bound vessel, but he was such a strange looking craft the officer of the watch felt a desire to know just what it was, for he had never before seen a vessel with hull, sails and spars, as black as night.

CHAPTER X.

THE SMUGGLERS AT HOME.

"WHAT craft is that?" came from the fortress in a loud, stern voice, as an officer suddenly took up the hail of the sentinel.

"The smuggler Evil Spirit, sir, Black Brandt captain, which I would like to surrender to you."

The answer brought a shout from those on the ramparts, which was at once silenced by the order:

"Ay, ay, come to and I will send a boat aboard."

"Ay, ay, sir," and as the sounds left his lips the daring smuggler suddenly changed his course, as though about to obey, bringing the stiff breeze abeam, from seaward, and ordering topsails run up went flying away and toward the shallow passage between Deer Island and the main land, at that time navigable for vessels of the draft of the Evil Spirit.

It was a minute or two before those in the fort realized that the vessel was not going about to run back and drop anchor or lay to off the fort, and she was fading from sight when the daring ruse of the smuggler was suspected.

"Water battery ho! fire a gun over that craft!" shouted the commandant and the order was obeyed.

But the Evil Spirit was over a quarter of a mile away then, and after the flash of the gun again altered her course suddenly and went dashing seaward.

Other guns were fired, and the harbor was illuminated by their red flashes, while rockets went up, and two vessels-of-war off the city, were signaled to go in chase.

But the black schooner was not touched, she

fairly flew over the waters, and changing her course frequently she was never seen twice in the same locality, so the gunners were at fault.

All the while Black Brandt himself had the helm of his vessel, his two officers stood near, one on either side, and the men stood by at the halliards to obey every order given, and it was done with a promptness that showed perfect training and marvelous skill.

The Evil Spirit was handled beautifully, yet though the iron shot poured over and near her, she was not touched and soon ran out of range and right toward the open sea.

The alarm had spread to the town, the two vessels-of-war answered the signals from the fort with rockets, and a brig and schooner, both fleet sailors, were at once put in pursuit.

Lights flashed in every window it seemed of the town, the vessels at anchor also were illuminated, hails rung out over the waters to know what the trouble was, the bells in the city made startling music, and the guns of the fort still thundered angrily.

Down the harbor past the fort came flying the war brig and schooner, and a hail from their decks brought response that:

"The smuggler Evil Spirit has been in the harbor and just sailed seaward."

So on the two vessels sped in hot pursuit, while Black Brandt stood at the helm until all was open sailing before him and then called two of his men to the wheel.

Looking over his crew he called out cheerily:

"Lads, I put you to the test under fire on purpose, and you stood the ordeal well."

"I can trust you, I see."

The crew greeted the words of compliment with a cheer, and glanced back at their pursuers.

But there was no dread in the look, for the speed of the Evil Spirit was too well known to fear any vessel sent in chase of them.

Dawn came a couple of hours after the Evil Spirit had passed the fort, and yet from the decks of the two pursuers the smuggler was nowhere visible.

Had she been sunk by the guns of the fort, all wondered, and gone down bodily?

It certainly appeared so to the pursuers.

And yet, finding that he was out of sight, the bold smuggler had simply run up for Deer Island Channel, and passing through had gotten a long lead that gave him a chance to drop his pursuers out of sight by dawn, for they looked seaward for him, not inshore, and returning to port in the afternoon, reported that it was firmly believed that the chase had been so crippled by the fire at the fort that when she struck the heavy seas outside she had foundered with all on board.

But meanwhile the daring man, who guided the destinies of the little black schooner, had gone on his way until he found a hiding-place inshore where he remained during the hours of daylight.

It was a rule of Black Brandt never to be seen by daylight, if possible, and not a single pursuing vessel had ever got a good look at the Evil Spirit under the glare of the sun.

When darkness came on he resumed his course once more, and thus, hiding by day, sailing by night, reached his retreat upon the coast of Maine.

This retreat was as secure as any one could wish, for to a vessel sailing close inshore as appeared safe, the coast presented a bold, rocky cliff for several leagues, with sunken rocks and reefs near its base.

Yet by dashing boldly in at a certain point a break in the cliff was found, narrow, dangerous of ingress and egress, yet all the more safe for that.

Through this pass the Evil Spirit wended her way, the rocks towering upon either side above her topmasts and crossing a small harborage, made her way into a basin narrow, rock bound and deep.

But not even here did the schooner drop anchor, for a boat was gotten out ahead, and she was towed into a stream that emptied into the basin, and the banks of which were so near together that gang-planks resting upon either bulwark reached the shore.

Here cables were made fast to trees, for upon all sides was a dense pine forest, and piled up masses of rock overhanging the retreat.

A path led up among the rocks to where the smugglers had their retreat, and here was kept the booty, under a guard of an officer and four men.

There were log cabins, caverns and every indication of a permanent camp, while in the stream above the Evil Spirit was a small sloop, with a crew on board, also used in the daring work of outlawry under Black Brandt.

The approach by land to this scene was so rugged, so barren that not even the most venturesome hunter in pursuit of game would dare its rough ways, and for leagues there was no sign of habitation.

So it was that the smugglers of the coast were secure in their retreat, and set at defiance all who sought to run them down, until the Evil Spirit was believed to be in reality a Black Phantom of the Sea.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ITINERANT PARSON.

LATE one afternoon, some days after the escape of the Evil Spirit from Boston Harbor, a horseman rode into the door-yard of Hermitage Hall, and dismounted.

His horse was a sorry-looking animal, the bridle and saddle appeared to have seen hard usage, and a pair of saddle-bags the rider took upon his arm after hitching the animal, had been well worn.

The horseman was dressed in a seedy suit of black, the coat buttoned up to the throat, and with high stock, holding the head erect.

He was the typical itinerant parson, as all knew at a glance, and his gray hair worn in long soaplocks hanging upon either side of his face, indicated that he had passed the meridian of life.

He wore a pair of gold spectacles with very large glasses, and had an expression upon his sanctimonious face as though he had been left in the lurch by the last friend he possessed on earth.

As he approached the side piazza he was met by Helen, who had seen him coming, and with respect to his cloth, was anxious to do all in her power to entertain him.

"Good-afternoon, sir, and let me welcome you to Hermitage Hall," she said, pleasantly.

"Good-afternoon, sister, and I thank you, for I am weary in body and sick at soul, while I do hunger and thirst," came the response in sepulchral tones.

"My brother is away now, sir, upon the sea, but will return by supper, and my mother is in the garden, and they will welcome you cordially.

"May I show you to your room now, as you might desire to rest before supper?"

"Yes, sister, I will seek the seclusion of my room to meditate," and the parson, who then gave his name as Black, followed Helen to the very comfortable chamber which was always kept ready for guests, for now and then a wayfarer happened in at Hermitage Hall.

"What a beautiful girl, and her face seems strangely familiar to me," muttered the parson, as Helen left him alone in his room.

Then he walked to the broad window and glanced out.

There was a lawn in front, a flower garden on one side, and beyond, the cliff overlooking the harbor and the vast sea.

"What a superb view," he said, aloud, and the sepulchral whine had wholly disappeared from his voice.

Like one who admired the beauty in nature, he gazed long upon the scene.

Then he made his toilet, brushing off the dust of travel, and again stepped to the window and gazed forth, his eyes falling upon a schooner dashing rapidly in under the pressure of a fair-breeze.

"That craft sails well, and she is handled in a masterly manner.

"Yes, it is the pleasure yacht of the estate, and, I take it, rather an expensive luxury for an agent, as this girl's brother must be of Commodore Hartwell.

"The craft sails as though she might be dangerous, and she appears to have a large crew.

"I was wise to come here and learn the situation of affairs.

"There, she glides in under the cliff to an anchorage."

The Sea Cloud had disappeared from his view, but still the parson stood at the window, apparently lost in deep reverie.

As the sun at last cast its last lengthening shadows, he was about to turn away from the window and go out of his room, when suddenly over the edge of the cliff appeared a form.

It was a young man in sailor suit, and he seemed to have scaled the side of the cliff to the summit, rather than follow the long path around to the mansion.

As he advanced the eyes of the parson were riveted upon him until suddenly broke from his lips the words:

"Great God! it is Claude Cassiday!"

The parson seemed deeply moved at the discovery he had made, fairly startled, and then this look gave way to one of almost malignant triumph.

"She said their name was Searle, yet she spoke of her brother as Claude.

"Yes, it was Claude Cassiday who thwarted my plot to kidnap Miss Hartwell, and this is the way in which the commodore has rewarded him by placing him in charge here.

"But he has changed his name from Cassiday to Searle, that is certain.

"Well, I am fortunate to have recognized him now, for my surprise might have betrayed me with his keen eyes.

"Yes, and his mother's too, for she knew me at once when last I saw her in spite of the years that have passed.

"Still, they believe me dead now, I am not in their minds, and as a parson, with my spectacles, dress and changed voice I will pass their inspection I hope.

"If not, it will be his life or mine, and as I am forewarned I am forearmed."

As he spoke he took a pistol from his saddle-bags and thrust it into his breast pocket, hiding its outline by a large red handkerchief.

Claude Searle meanwhile had crossed the lawn to the house, and as the shadows began to deepen, there came a firm step in the corridor and a tap upon the door.

"Come in," said the parson in his hark-from-the-tombs voice.

The door opened and Claude stepped in, saying pleasantly:

"I am glad to see you, sir, for my sister told me we were so fortunate as to have a guest beneath our roof."

"My name is Claude Searle, sir, and, as it is near supper time, please come out and meet my mother."

"I thank you, my son, I thank you—'The Lord loveth a cheerful giver'—and blessed are those who minister unto one of his chosen teachers."

"My name is Black, Brother Searle, Parson Ezekiel Black, and it will afford me pleasure to meet the inmates of your house."

The words were spoken in the sepulchral whine, which in those days was tolerated in the clergy, and Claude never dreamt for an instant that he was entertaining a wolf in the wool of a lamb.

He led the way toward the sitting-room, Parson Black carrying his Bible under his arm, and a cheerful scene presented itself as they entered the chamber where Mrs. Searle and Helen sat.

"My mother, Parson Black—my sister Helen you have already met," said Claude as they entered the room together.

The parson bowed low, then grasped the extended hand of the lady and said something in which there was a quotation from Scripture.

Fortunately for the man a parson was treated with far more reverence in those days than now, and his sepulchral voice and sanctimonious whine was regarded as a part and parcel of the calling of men of the cloth, and not, as now, of his stock in trade.

So, "Parson Black" found himself warmly welcomed at Hermitage Hall, and not a suspicion in the minds of any of the three that he was a serpent warming on the hearth-stone to strike at the breasts of those who entertained him.

CHAPTER XII.

A WOLF IN THE FOLD.

At first "Parson Black" was rather reserved in manner.

He wished to go cautiously and not betray that he was an arrant fraud, especially let it be suspected who he really was.

Such discovery could only end one way, in his death or Claude Searle's, and this pretended preacher did not wish to happen.

A good supper warmed him up however and he became quite communicative, telling of the experience he had as an itinerant "worker in the vineyard," as he expressed it.

He really entertained his hosts, for he talked well, and the idea of doubting a word the good man uttered would have been a sin in their eyes, though he did tell some marvelous tales of his adventures.

At last bedtime came, and as coolly as he had asked the blessing at the supper table, he now held prayers, praying with a fervency which touched his hearers.

Upon going to his room he said he would rise early and go on his way, but Claude told him that he had to depart on business soon after dawn and he would not hear to his going without breakfast.

So the man retired having so led the conversation as to glean what knowledge he could of the household and their coming there, for Mrs. Searle had told him that they had met with their sorrows in life and were glad to live in seclusion.

At an early hour there was a tap on his door and he was told that breakfast would be ready by the time he had made his toilet.

When he entered the breakfast room he found Mrs. Searle and Helen there awaiting him, but was told that Claude had departed half an hour before, but left his respects and farewell for Parson Black.

The breakfast was a most tempting one and Parson Black ate heartily, after he had asked a blessing which was of painful duration for a hungry person.

He then thanked the widow and Helen for the hospitality shown him, clasped his hand over a gold piece slipped into his palm by Mrs. Searle with the whisper:

"For charity, sir," and mounting his rested and well-fed horse, rode away leaving his blessing upon the household.

During breakfast he had asked as many questions as he dared, and once he had left the mansion behind him he muttered to himself:

"I see, they dropped the name of Cassiday because it had been dishonored by Claude, whether in reality or falsely accused I know not, though I cannot believe the boy guilty."

"Well, what a discovery for me to make, and how fortunate!"

"How beautiful is Helen, even more so than was her mother at her age."

"I fairly love her already, and what a triumph for me, what a delicious revenge if I could make her my wife."

"I lost the mother, and to marry the daughter would be revenge enough for a lifetime."

"I could then forgive Claude for piloting the brig-of-war down upon my stronghold and afterward running my beautiful vessel to destruction."

"Yes, I could forgive him then, when Helen is the wife of Kent Curtis, *alias* Kent the Buccaneer, *alias* Black Brandt the Smuggler, *alias* Parson Ezekiel Black."

"Ha! ha! a new life seems opening to me."

"But then there is Zaphiel, the niece of old Gripstein the Jew, whom I am in love with, and who is, I verily believe, in love with me."

"But then what is she to Helen and revenge."

"If I ran off with Zaphiel and made her my wife, of course old Gripstein would have to shell out liberally; but money I have and am getting more, so it shall be Helen and revenge."

"Ab! an idea strikes me!"

"Why should I not kidnap fair Zaphiel and make the Jew pay me a heavy ransom?"

"He will never suspect me, the way I will manage it."

"Then the warning of Wo-ton-ka did not include beautiful Zaphiel, only the lovely Celeste Hartwell."

"Well, I have my hands full, and must play my cards well to win, but win I shall."

"If that fellow Kipp is right, then there is a pirate treasure in the old mansion, for he says that he was a boy with Belmont the Buccaneer, and knows that when the mansion was deserted, after the death of the old exile, that Captain Belmont made it his retreat there, and had his treasure with him."

"Belmont was captured and hanged, with all his men, so the treasure, Kipp says, is there, and certainly he described the place well to me, though he has not seen it for over thirty years."

"He says, too, that Belmont had a beautiful captive there whom he had run off with from her home, she little dreaming that he was a pirate, and one night she disappeared, and with her a vast number of jewels."

"No trace of her was ever found, and it was thought she escaped and threw herself into the sea from the cliff, with all of the treasure she could carry belonging to Belmont."

"Well, the old place looks haunted by all kinds of deeds and memories, and I rested most uneasily last night, delightful as was my bed and surroundings, and hideous phantoms, instead of the beautiful face of fair Helen, seemed to hover about me."

"Ah! but there is much for me to do; but I will take my time and all will come well."

"But first to kidnap Zaphiel as soon as I can arrange it."

So musing, the smuggler rode on his way along the forest highway for miles, going into a country that seemed wholly deserted.

He at last hauled off from the stage-road into the forest, following a dimly-marked path, and after a ride of a few miles, came to a desolate-looking cabin surrounded by a few acres of cultivated land.

Several cows and sheep stood about in the pasture, and a horse the match of the one he rode was in the stable lot.

A man came out of the cabin as he approached, and spoke politely to him, asking:

"Did you find the place, sir?"

"Yes, Kipp, and I am sure there is no treasure there."

"I am sure that there is, sir, and I've lived here for ten years, hoping some time to get the chance to find the place deserted, so I could search thoroughly, but the chances were against me by day, and at night I confess I do not care to enter the old spook retreat, so I told you what I did."

"Well I shall find it if then, Kipp, and we will go halves."

"Now I'll get out of this infernal rig and go to my vessel," and the speaker entered the cabin.

Half an hour after he reappeared, and revealed the that wolf in sheep's clothing was none other than Black Brandt the smuggler, whose secret retreat lay but a league distant from Kipp's cabin.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN DOUBT.

THE guns from the castle, fired upon the flying "Black Phantom," under the command of the daring smuggler Chief Brandt, startled the good people of Boston from their slumbers.

The first almost to hear the guns, for she saw the flash, was Wo-ton-ka the Woman of Mystery.

She was seated upon the piazza, after the departure of the smuggler captain.

She had seen him leave the house and then had said something in a low tone to Holdfast, her large hound.

He had understood the command given, scented the trail and started upon it at a trot.

Before very long he returned and found Wo-ton-ka seated upon the little piazza.

"Which way, my good dog?" she said, and rising she followed.

The dog halted at the Cassiday Cottage gate and sniffed about the ground, then continued on along the ridge, down the path to the sea-shore.

Here he halted at the water's edge.

"I see, he went off to his vessel."

"That was right," and she glanced out over the waters, while she patted the dog in a kindly way.

Returning along the shore she reached her home by another path and threw herself into the chair of bones, which she called her "Death Chair."

"He will not dare disobey my warning!" she mused.

"No, he will not kidnap her after all I have said."

"Did he do so, did he meet her he would love her, and then what untold misery would it bring to her."

"Did she rival me I could hate her, though she was kind to me, ever so kind, for when I was ill she came here and cared for me day after day:

"She is a noble woman and he shall not steal her away."

"And glad am I that that other beautiful creature, Helen Cassiday, is not here to be in his path."

"She too is noble and good, and did Kent Curtis see her then he would crush her young life."

"He is revengeful toward her brother who wrecked his vessel and destroyed his stronghold, and he would visit his hatred upon her."

"If he will only stick to his lawless life for the present I can ask no more, for it is so different from his evil career as a buccaneer, his murderous life upon the sea, robbing and slaying, while the hand of every man was raised against him."

"So he thinks he has seen her before?"

"What would he not give to know when and where?"

"He has forgotten, but I have had nothing to do in all these long years but remember."

"How strange it is that he wins the love of women, children and men as he does."

"There is a magnetism that draws them to him and hides from them his heart, his blackened, reddened life—but God help the woman that loves him!"

She was silent a moment and then there came from the harbor a bright red flash.

Momentarily it illuminated the scene and revealed the distant fortress and a vessel near it.

The woman sprung to her feet as in dire alarm, and as another shot came she cried:

"Yes, it is his vessel and he has dared to run down toward the city and run the gantlet of the fort."

"There was no need of this, and he has done it in the sheer daring of his nature."

"Ha! the fort is in earnest, for see, it sends up rockets and burns a blue light."

"Yes, there is his craft looking like a black phantom flying over the waters."

"Ha! the vessels-of-war up the harbor answer the fort's signals, and now Black Brandt has run his neck into the noose, for he will be taken, recognized and executed."

"Ah! why was he so foolhardy when he could have crept out to sea unseen, just as he came in, for his black craft nearly ran over my little skiff before I saw her, and made me lose my supper of fish too."

"Ha! the two cruisers are in pursuit now, and how the fort fires."

She arose and went to the edge of the cliff, standing there and gazing out over the waters.

The wind blew stiffly from the sea, and a heavy surf was running outside, for its roar reached her ears.

The signaling between the fortress and pursuing cruisers was distinctly visible, but the Evil Spirit seemed to have disappeared wholly, faded into darkness.

She placed a powerful sight-glass to her eyes and searched the harbor diligently, for she knew the channels and islands well.

But nowhere was the black schooner visible, and the pursuers did not fire, so she could not be seen from their decks.

"What does it mean?" she asked herself over and over again.

But the question she asked herself she could find no answer to.

The lights of the cruisers sped seaward, marking their course, and at last they disappeared from view.

But no flashing of their guns was seen, and they, too, faded from view.

Then Wo-ton-ka returned to her cabin and until dawn sat upon the piazza gazing seaward.

When at last the morning mists drifted away she again swept the harbor, bay and sea with her powerful glass.

Then, far out at sea, she beheld the brig and schooner-of-war.

Their movements showed that they too were searching for the Black Phantom.

She had escaped them, but how?

That Wo-ton-ka could not understand; but with a sigh of relief she went in to get much-needed sleep after her long vigil.

And in another hour the thundering of the guns awoke the inmates, and one at least knew the cause of the firing.

That one was Moses Gripstein, who was awakened from a refreshing slumber, after having lain awake for a long while.

"It vas dat fool Brandt v'ot make t'e guns roar," he cried, anxiously.

"Yes, he vas come in mit t'e vessels, and t'e harbor full of forts and war-ships, and dey vas catchin' him pretty quick."

"Mine Gott in Himmel! did you vas hear dat guns?"

"Oh! put he vas killed dead pretty soon, and mine ships vas gone, mine monish lost."

"Oh! don't you hear dose guns?"

"Dey vas knock things, I tell you," and Moses arose to get what consolation he could from Emanuel, but that youth had already dressed rapidly, and gone down toward the wharves, to see what the cannonading was about, so the money-lender could only return to his room, as a knock at Zaphiel's door failed to arouse her, which caused him to mutter:

"She sleep so like dead peoples."

CHAPTER XIV.

MOSES OBEYS ORDERS.

MOSES GRIPSTEIN did not rest well, after retiring to his bed again, even though the firing of the fort had ceased.

His brain conjured up at once a belief that the firing had ended, on account of the capture of the smuggler, and he not only regretted the loss of his vessel, but also the loss of the chief outlaw.

He cared more for what his own losses would be, through the death of Black Brandt, than for what the smuggler captain might have to suffer personally.

When Emanuel came in, after his run down to the wharves, the money-lender called out quickly:

"Vell, Emanuel, v'at vas t'e pig guns shootin' apout so horrible?"

"The smuggler chief, Black Brandt, ran into the harbor with his wonderful craft, hailed the fort and after telling them who he was put to sea again, is about what I found out, uncle."

"Vas dot so, and vas he got out to sea safe?"

"So I heard, sir; but, Zaphiel, are you up too?"

"Yes brother, I am not sleeping well to-night; but tell me, did the—the-smuggler escape?" and she seemed strangely anxious for the fate of an outlaw.

"So I heard, but all was excitement at the wharves, and the two cruisers in port have gone in chase, and it is hoped that he will be captured," and Emanuel passed into his room.

The next morning Zaphiel looked pale and wan, and Moses anxious and cross, while the firing during the night was discussed at the breakfast table.

Zaphiel seemed most anxious all day, until late in the evening the news came that the smuggler craft had been so crippled by the fort as to go down as soon as she reached deep water and the heavy seas outside the bay.

The following morning she eagerly read the account in the paper, which gave a full account of the affair as gleaned from those who knew.

The article was as follows:

BEARDED IN OUR HARBOR!

BRANDT THE SMUGGLER'S DARING!

THE FORTS AND CRUISERS DEFIED!

BLACK BRANDT'S DOOM!

"Our citizens were awakened night before last by the roar of artillery down the harbor, and for awhile all was alarm and excitement, no one seeming to know just what was the matter.

"The fort was seen to be firing heavily and signaling the cruisers which at once got under way and rushed seaward at full speed.

"We learn that the cause of the firing was the daring entrance into our harbor of the smuggler chief, known as Black Brandt, who has defied capture by our cruisers and cutters.

"He ran in under cover of the night in his black schooner, known as the Evil Spirit, and on his way out coolly answered the hail of the fort and told who he was, while he said he wished to surrender.

"He was told to heave to and a boat would be sent aboard, and naturally all supposed he would obey, until he was seen to be flying away toward Deer Island, under full sail.

"Fire was opened upon him, but if he was hit he did not show it, though he changed his course frequently, at last heading for the open sea, while the fort signaled the brig-of-war and schooner lying up the harbor to go in chase.

"This they did with all speed, and it was seen that the smuggler turned widely from his course, and after rushing toward deep water and striking the heavy seas, he was lost to sight.

"It is supposed that he was so badly crippled by the fort's fire that his vessel went down with all on board, and this belief seems to have confirmation in the fact that the two cruisers could see nothing of him when the sun rose, which they could have most certainly done had he headed up or down the coast.

"It may therefore be considered as next to a certainty that the famous Evil Spirit has gone to the bottom of the sea, with Black Brandt and his crew

on board, thus ending the career of the most daring of smugglers and fleetest of crafts.

"If we can glean any further information, as to the cause of the smuggler's coming into our port, or whether our surmise of his fate is correct, we will place the facts before our readers in to-morrow's paper."

This was the account that told the story of Black Brandt's daring run into the harbor to Zaphiel, and of his supposed doom.

"Can he be dead?" she mused to herself.

"Can it be that he has thus gone to his doom with all his crimes unpardoned?"

"How strange it is that I, knowing who and what he is, should regard him as I do."

"I who would abhor a cruel or sinful act yet find myself drawn toward this man as to no other."

"How true it is that we cannot command our hearts, for something about that man has fascinated me, and I would sacrifice life to win him away from his evil career."

"But I cannot, I will not believe he is dead, for he is not one to thus die."

So mused Zaphiel the beautiful Jewess in the seclusion of her own room.

At last she sprung to her feet and said earnestly:

"Yes, she should know.

"I will go to Wo-ton-ka the Woman of Mystery and have her tell me if he is dead."

And the same account of the affair Moses Gripstein had greedily devoured.

He had also come to the conclusion after mature deliberation, that Black Brandt had weighed chances well and had escaped.

"That he had acted in sheer bravado and knew what he could do, so that, though it was generally believed that he had met his doom he had found some means of escape."

"He vas no fools, and maybe he don't drown."

"No, I guesses not, for he vas born to be hang up mit a rope, dat vas so."

"Dey don't sees him get away, put he vas got avay all t'e same."

"Yes, dey say he vas die dead many times before, but he vas live all t'e same and he don't pe dead now I vas so sure."

"But I must now look to t'e pizziness of t'e sailor mans in prison."

"I must see v'at I can do to get him out pretty quick, so I must."

"But v'at shall I do?"

"He vas in prison and I vas out, so I don't know how it vas I can helps him."

"Vell I tell me! I vill go to the vicher womans and let her help me to get t'e mans out."

"T'e vicher womans vill make me pay mooth monish, but I make Black Brandt pay me pack all t'e same."

"Yes, I vill obey his orders and get t'e vicher womans to get t'e man out of t'e prison pretty quick, so I vill."

And so Moses also found a reason for seeking the aid of the Woman of Mystery.

CHAPTER XV.

WO-TON-KA'S VISITOR.

THE same day of Zaphiel's resolve to consult the Woman of Mystery, she ordered her riding horse, and saying nothing to her uncle or Emanuel about her going out alone, mounted and rode away.

She was a splendid horsewoman, wore a well-fitting and becoming habit, and looked well in the saddle.

She made a circuit of the town, not wishing to attract attention, and approached the cliff, upon which stood Wo-ton-ka's home, from the beach.

Here she dismounted and tied her horse, ascending the cliff path toward the cabin.

She had often heard of the witch, and yet had never before visited her as many a sentimental maid had done to "have her fortune told."

Wo-ton-ka was seated in her death-chair, her pets about her, and the dog, by a growl, gave notice of the approach of a visitor, while the parrot sung out shrilly:

"Pretty girl! walk in! walk in!"

The woman glanced up quietly from some work she was engaged upon, and said pleasantly:

"Good-morning, Miss Gripstein."

"Ah! you know me?"

"Yes, as the child of the money-lender."

"The niece."

"No, the daughter."

Zaphiel paled slightly, for she knew that even her brother Emanuel knew the secret that they were the children of Moses Gripstein, not the niece and nephew.

"You are Wo-ton-ka?" she said, awed by the woman's presence.

"Yes, the witch."

"I had believed you different."

"Ah! what had you pictured me?"

"But, be seated, please," and she waved her hand toward a chair facing her own seat, a chair painted over with many strange devices.

Zaphiel sunk into the chair, and said:

"I had formed an idea of witches from several I had seen, and they were old and forbidding, while you are young, beautiful and kind."

Wo-ton-ka smiled and saw that the words were meant, and not said for effect.

"I am a witch all the same; but you came to seek information of me, Miss Gripstein?"

"You know that also?"

"Yes."

"But how did you know me, why is it you can tell my reason for coming?"

"Did you observe the flag floating over my cabin as you came?"

"Not particularly, madam."

"Step out yonder and see it."

Zaphiel obeyed and beheld a flag which had been skillfully painted.

It was of a storm at sea, with great dashing waves, and in its midst a vessel lay to, calmly riding out the tempest.

The vessel was jet black and a three-masted schooner.

In spite of her nerve Zaphiel turned pale, and returning to the cabin asked in almost a whisper:

"What does that flag mean?"

"You recognize the vessel?"

"From its appearance it is like the description of the craft known as the Evil Spirit."

"Black Brandt the smuggler's vessel?"

"Yes."

"It is surrounded by danger, you see?"

"I do."

"Yet it calmly rides out the gale?"

"Yes."

"Then the question you would ask me is answered."

"Ah! you are a wonderful woman, and I do believe in your supernatural powers!"

"You came to me to know if the story was true that Black Brandt was lost?"

"I did."

"What interest have you, Zaphiel, beautiful, pure as a dove and an heiress, in Black Brandt the outcast, the sea-brigand, vile and red-handed?" the Woman of Mystery asked suddenly.

The face of the Jewess turned pale and then crimsoned quickly.

She made no reply.

The woman gazed at her an instant and seemed to read her inmost soul, and what she read caused her own dark face to assume a sudden pallor.

Then she said:

"It matters not what interest you hold in him, so do not profane your lips with falsehood, and try to deceive me, for you cannot."

"You are here to know the fate of Black Brandt, and the flag floating over you answers."

"He is safe, then?"

"Does his vessel seem in danger there?"

"It is being tossed by a wild tempest."

"True, and his life is encompassed with dangers equal to those that endanger his ship; but he passes as serenely through them."

"Then he did not go down that awful night?"

"The flag shows his vessel afloat."

Zaphiel was silent a moment, and then said:

"I thank you, and I would pay you for your services. May I ask you to name a sum?"

"Nothing, to you."

"Ah! and why not?"

"I have my own reasons."

"But, you will let me recompense you, I am sure, for I came for information and you gave it me."

"I wish no recompense from you; but you believe what I have told you—that Black Brandt is safe?"

"I do."

"Then your belief in me is my recompense."

"One moment. Will you wear this for me?"

"She had slipped off her glove, and drawing from her finger a ruby ring, took the hand of the strange woman.

Before Wo-ton-ka was aware of her act, Zaphiel slipped the ring upon her finger.

The woman started and again paled; then she said, in a low tone:

"Yes, I will wear this for your sake, and do you wear this for mine."

She drew from a box fastened to her chair a gold chain, to which was fastened an amulet.

It was an exquisite red stone, and upon it were strange devices cut.

"No, no, you do not mean for me to take this from you? It is beautiful, so very beautiful!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE JEW AND THE WITCH.

WO-TON-KA hastily lowered the flag, which she had raised for the benefit of Zaphiel, when she beheld Moses Gripstein approaching, and ran another up to the flag-staff.

The Jew had dismounted from his carriage over on the ridge, and was coming on foot to the cabin of the witch.

He was dressed in his best, and it may be said to have been a very flashy style of robing one's self.

He had a ruffled-shirt, knee breeches with silk stockings, diamond-studded buckles upon his shoes, velvet pants and a green frock coat with huge brass buttons.

His stock was high, holding his head erect, and his hat was a relic of other days.

A huge fob chain hung from his pocket, and he had evidently gotten himself up to make an impression.

He came on slowly, carrying a gold-headed cane in his hand, ready for the dog should he attack him.

Seeing Wo-ton-ka seated upon the piazza he advanced at a more rapid pace, and congratulated himself that he would escape a combat with the dog and also that he had come in the glare of day.

It was more soothing to his nerves, Zaphiel he did not catch a glimpse of, though she did see her uncle's carriage as she skirted around the ridge homeward.

She wondered, too, why he was seeking Wo-ton-ka, and he would have wondered still more why she had gone there.

"Well, mees, I salute you," he said, with a low bow, as he approached.

"You are welcome, Mr. Gripstein; be seated, please."

He obeyed, taking the chair occupied a few minutes before by Zaphiel.

Moses seemed ill at ease.

He remembered his previous visit there, when the witch had taken the Cassiday Cottage mortgage off his hands, and he had not enjoyed himself on that occasion.

As he did not speak, the witch began the conversation with the startling words:

"Well, sir, you have come to know if Black Brandt is dead or alive?"

"Mine Gott in Himmel! Vicher womans! You vas read me like a A B C book," cried the Jew.

"That is my power, man.

"Have I not spoken the truth?"

"Vell, you vas, for I vants to know if dot scamps vas drowned, as he vas so bad a mans upon t'e seas, don't you vas understands, and make me lots of troubles mit my goots."

Wo-ton-ka laughed, and the Jew looked inquiringly at her.

"V'y you t'ink it vas funny, vitcher womans?"

"Moses Gripstein!" sternly said the woman.

"Vell?"

"You cannot deceive me."

"I don't vas understand."

"Then I will tell you that you are here to know the fate of Black Brandt, that you fear he is lost, ship and all, and hence it will hit your purse hard, for I know what your dealings with him are, though no one else suspects it."

"Mine gootness! Vitcher womans, you vas so strange."

"Yes, and I know strange things about human kind."

"I tell no secrets that I see, or the world would be the worse, mankind and womankind would be at war with each other."

"Now answer me if I must tell you the truth about Black Brandt?"

"I vant to know," said Moses, anxiously, now regretting that he had come to consult Wo-ton-ka.

"Step to that tree yonder, and see what flag floats above my cabin."

The Jew arose and obeyed.

His face paled as he came back to his seat, and said:

"It vas a very strange flag."

"Yes, very strange indeed, for you know it as Blank Brandt's flag, the colors of his vessel, the Evil Spirit."

Moses groaned and Wo-ton-ka continued:

"Now do you observe that the Evil Spirit flag still waves?"

"It does."

"That means that the Evil Spirit still floats, that Black Brandt is not dead."

"Vell! vell! you vas read t'ings peautiful; but I vas vant to see you apout somedings else."

"Very well, Moses Gripstein; but pay as you go."

"V'at I pays for?"

"The information about your partner, Black Brandt."

"Dere vas ten dollars."

"My price for information as to the life or death of any one is fifty dollars."

"Mine gracious! it vas too much."

"I know where I could get a hundred times the sum to tell what I know about Moses Gripstein."

"Here, here vas t'e monish, vitcher womans," cried Moses quickly.

"Wo-ton-ka took the gold and asked:
"Now what would you know?"
"Don't you vas know?"
"You seek my aid?"
"Dat vas so, I vants you to save t'e man v'at vas now in prison."

The woman seemed to catch at his meaning with wonderful quickness and accuracy, and said:

"You mean the kidnapper?"

"Yes, dat vas t'e mans."

"You do not wish him to come to trial?"

"No."

"He might tell some unpleasant stories."

"Yes, he might talk too much."

"Then you wish him gotten out of prison?"

"Dat vas it?"

"It is no easy task."

"Dat vas so."

"You failed to release him, so came to me."

"Vell, dat vas so."

"When is his trial to be?"

"In one week."

"Well, I will set him free."

"Dat vas goot; but can you?"

"I never promise that which I am unable to fulfill."

"Vell, I believe you, vicher womans."

"Now, I must have money to work with, and to give the man to make his escape with when he gets out."

"More monish?"

"Not unless you care to pay for his release."

"Vell, v'at you vishes?"

"I will free the man for five hundred dollars."

Moses sprung to his feet with a Hebrew imprecation, while he ground out between his teeth!

"Five hunder tuyvils!

"Vitcher womans, you vas so crazy as mad beopplees."

"Dont pay it, Moses Gripstein, for there is no need to unless you wish the man free."

"I gif you fifty dollars."

"Is the man's secret, should he be forced to tell all he knows, to save himself, not worth more than five times five hundred dollars to you?"

Moses groaned aloud.

"If he told his story would not the sign of Moses Gripstein the money-lender be taken down?"

"In truth, would not Moses Gripstein be the one to go to prison, while the man who told his story came out free?"

"Oh Himmel! vitcher womans, I gif you t'e monish you vas vant—five hunder dollars."

"If I need more I shall use my own money and demand recompense of you."

"Vell, but go so easy dot you don't vas vant more."

"Do you mean if I cannot get the man out for the sum named I am to let him remain in prison and return you what you will now pay me?"

"No, I vants dot mans oud."

"Very well, I'll free him, and I'll only ask more in case I need more to use, not for my own pay."

"Vell, here vos t'e monish," and each gold piece counted out seemed to be like drops of blood from the Jew's heart, as had the once brave, patriotic conspirator of years before been changed by the greed of gold, which had supplanted the germ of patriotism in his heart.

Having paid the money over, he arose and took his departure, Wo-ton-ka watching him until he reached his carriage and drove rapidly away.

Then she mused:

"As he has bled others of gold, so I made him bleed."

"Now to free that man as I promised, though it is no easy task."

"Still it must be done."

CHAPTER XVII.

SATAN MAKES A CALL.

THE town jail at the time I write of, was a stout structure of stone, with a wall surrounding it.

In the latter was a public gate and a private door, the former of iron, the latter heavily iron-bound boards.

When the gates were closed for the night a guard was placed in a sentry-box at the door in the wall, and this was just inside.

This was the only one on duty in the jail by night, and the one selected was always a stout-hearted fellow, strong as a lion and able to cope with an escaping prisoner, or one who sought to raid the jail.

There were secret knocks given for admittance and unless the guard within received the right signal he was not to unbar or unlock the door.

A prisoner within his cell, or in the common guard-room, could not escape without freeing himself of his irons, unlocking the iron grated door of his cell, and then overcoming the guard, so such a thing as for a man to get out of that carcel was simply impossible it was thought.

One rainy night the guard inside stood close within his sentry-box, congratulating himself that he was secure from a ducking.

He was a large man, faithful, and had been on the duty of guarding prisoners.

He was half asleep, lulled by the patter of the rain upon his sentry-box, when he was startled by a rap from without.

No prisoner was expected, and he had no intimation of the visit of a jail official.

It was after midnight, and the wind moaned dismally about the eaves of the jail, while a lonesome dog in his kennel howled most mournfully.

The rap came again, and this time there was no doubt in it, for it was the signal.

First came one rap, then after a pause three, another pause and two, followed by six sharp ones rapidly hit upon the door.

"It is the signal: but who can it be?" muttered the guard as he unbarred the door and then taking the key from his belt turned it in the massive lock.

A chain prevented the door opening for more than a few inches, and the guard, standing behind asked:

"Who comes?"

"Boston Light!" came the response.

It was the password for the night and the guard opened the door, the stranger, enveloped in a long cloak, stepped within and said:

"Come with me—you are wanted!"

"Where?"

"In Hades!"

The guard started back until he staggered into his small, dimly lighted quarters.

The stranger stepped up to the door, spread out his arms, and the guard groaned and stared in horror.

There before him stood what he firmly believed to be the devil.

His long cloak shed the water like marble, and as the arms opened it seemed that they wore huge wings, red as blood on the inside.

The hands were claw-like, the body robed in close-fitting scarlet, and upon the head were a pair of short horns.

The nose and chin were peaked and two black eyes peered cunningly into the frightened face of the guard.

"Who are you?" he gasped in a hoarse whisper.

"Satan," was the laconic response.

Again the guard moaned, while in a quivering voice he asked:

"Did you say you wanted me?"

"Yes, for I know all that your life has been."

"Oh, mercy!"

"Satan shows no mercy."

"My poor wife and children."

"How much do you love them?"

"More than the world."

"See here, I will give you a respite, if you can furnish a substitute."

"My God! I can find no substitute."

"Then you will have to go with me."

"Oh, mercy! mercy!"

"Find a substitute, or go with me."

"Who can I find?" came the despairing question.

"Think!"

"Ab! there is a poor devil—oh! I beg pardon, Mister Satan!—a poor fellow, I mean, who is to be hanged next week."

"He will not do, for I will get him soon enough."

"There is a crazy man here in jail, who killed his brother."

"He is not a responsible sinner, and Cain set him the example."

"Will you take a man who is to be tried as kidnapper and pirate within the week?"

"Yes, lock that door and go after him; I will follow."

"Will you not wait here, good Mister Satan?"

"I will follow you."

"Oh, certainly, if you wish, but if you take this man, I am to be let go free."

"Yes."

"God bless you, Mister Satan, for—"

"Farewell," said the grim midnight caller, as the door was opened, and, seizing the prisoner by the arm he stepped forth with him into the street.

The door closed quickly behind them, and with a bound the guard was in his sentry box, trembling, quivering in terror.

"Now come with me, for you are a free man," said the rescuer of the prisoner.

"Who are you?"

"Ask no questions, but obey," was the stern rejoinder, and she led the way along the deserted streets.

For a long distance they went until the town was left behind and the weird guard halted among the rocks in a ravine.

There stood a horse, saddled and bridled, and with a pair of saddle-bags and a cloak thrown across the saddle.

"Mount this horse and ride speedily to join your chief, Black Brandt, who awaits you. You know the way, and the horse is a good one."

"There is a cloak, and other clothes and a disguise are in one side of the saddle-bags, food in the other, and here is a purse of gold—go!"

"Who are you that saved me?"

"See!"

The arms were outspread like huge bat wings, each claw grasped a bull's-eye lantern which was turned full upon the grim being, and with a cry of terror the rescued man flung himself into the saddle of his horse and dashed away like the very wind.

He was fully convinced that the devil himself had been his rescuer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOSES HEARS THE NEWS OF THE ESCAPE.

"UNCLE, did you hear the news?" asked Emanuel Gripstein, entering the private office of his uncle the next morning after a trip about the town on a collecting tour.

"No, v'ot vas it?"

"There has been a most remarkable escape from the jail."

The Jew sprung to his feet shouting:

"Goot! goot! who vas he?"

"Do you consider an escape from the jail good, uncle?" asked Emanuel in surprise.

"Emanuel you vas a fool."

"V'ot did I say vas goot for a prisoner to escape?"

"I thought you vas say dey vas capture a prisoner for t'e jails."

"No, uncle, I said that there was an escape and a remarkable one last night."

"V'ot vas it?"

"Do you believe Satan visits the earth, uncle?"

"Emanuel, vas you coming crazy like a fool?"

"No, uncle, but about half the people in the town now believe the devil paid the city a visit last night."

"Emanuel, I don't haf time for funny pizziness."

"Dese vas pizziness hours, and you talk like you haf take too much prandy."

"Uncle, I assure you I am not joking, but in dead earnest, for last night in the storm the devil visited the jail, scared the guard half out of his wits, and rescued a prisoner."

"Emanuel, I vas tell you to haf another lock and bolt put upon the doors and windows all round, so go right out and haf it done pretty quick."

"But, uncle, let me tell you of Satan first."

"Vell, v'ot vas you haf to say?"

"The guard at the jail, Jim Sledge, a giant in size and the best man in the force, heard the signal given at the gate entrance last night when it was raining, and he opened the door and demanded the pass-word."

"It was given and he admitted the visitor as in duty bound."

"Who vas he?"

"The devil, uncle."

"Emanuel, I vants to know all about it."

"I am telling you, uncle."

"This visitor told Sledge that he was Satan and had come for him."

"By the light in the sentry-box, Sledge saw that he wore a long black cloak, and when he raised his arms he beheld scarlet wings with claws, and claw-like hands."

"He had a bunch of gold, silver, red and black keys hanging to his belt, and two small dark lanterns."

"But he was scarlet from feet to head, and he had horns, pointed ears and hooked nose and chin."

"In fact Sledge said it was the devil, and he told him he had come to take him to Hades."

"Sledge begged and prayed, spoke of his family and was told to find a substitute."

"He at once decided that he would select a man who is to be hanged next week, but Satan said he would get him soon enough."

"Then he spoke of some one else, the madman whom you remember killed his brother, and Satan said he was not responsible."

"Then Sledge told him there was a kidnapper there who was also suspected of piracy and he was to be tried soon."

"This seemed to please him, and he made Sledge lead the way to his cell, and he was brought out."

"When they got to the gate—"

"The kidnapper too, Emanuel?"

"Yes, uncle."

"When they reached the gate Satan told Sledge he would give him a powder to keep him from sinning and he put it on his tongue, telling him to lock the door after him."

"He did so as soon as the grim visitor and the prisoner had gone out."

"But t'e prisoners he got away."

"Sledge says that Satan took him away to Hades with him."

"Vell, vell! but he got away?"

"He left the jail, uncle."

"Vell, vell."

"But Sledge sunk into a fit of unconscious fright after their departure and was found there this morning by the keeper."

"It was a long time before he could be brought to by the doctors, but at last he recovered and told his story, and the prisoners in the jail had already told of what they had seen, a cloaked form following close behind Sledge, while they carried the prisoner out of his cell."

"Of course most sensible people believe that Sledge was deceived by some clever man who sought to rescue the kidnapper, and there are those who swear that it was Black Brandt the smuggler, as the man was said to be one of his band."

"But he got away?"

"Unfortunately yes, uncle, and he will, being free, become a terror I fear to Miss Hartwell again."

"Vell, he got away."

"You are surely not glad of it, uncle?"

"I vas so sorry I could cry tears, Emanuel; but he vas a very wicked mans dot t'e tuyvils come for him before he vas dead."

"You don't really believe it was Satan, do you, uncle?"

"Vell, dere vas strange t'ings in dis world, Emanuel, and I vant you to go and get t'e bolts for t'e doors and windows, for I don't want t'e tuyvil to come here at nighttimes and steal you avay, my son."

"Steal me away, uncle?"

"Yes, maybe he vant you next, so you vas petter look sharp pretty quick and don't spend so much monish."

"You vas a goot-looking young mans, Emanuel, and he likes handsome beobles and wicked ones, so you petter be goot, don't you see?"

But Emanuel did not like the idea of a visit from his Satanic Majesty and hastened away to obey his uncle's order about the bolts and bars, while he muttered:

"Can uncle be at the bottom of that rescue, for he has shown strange interest in that prisoner of late."

"Well, I only hope the fellow will do no harm, and I shall write an anonymous note to Miss Hartwell, placing her upon her guard now that he is free."

"Would that I dared write to her openly; but alas! I can love her only in silence, and unknown."

"She is a Christian. I a Jew, and—but stranger things have happened than Christian and Jew wedding," and Emanuel walked on in deep thought, leaving his uncle meanwhile rejoicing over the quick escape of the kidnapping sailor, though sadly puzzled at the manner of his going, as he muttered to himself:

"Dat vicher womans vas a vonder pretty sure, if she pring t'e tuyvil up to aid her."

"I don't vonder it vas expensive, and maybe she vants more monish."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ANONYMOUS WARNING.

NOT a rival did Celeste Hartwell have in Boston, as far as her personal loveliness was concerned, and certainly no one could contest the claim of being as rich an heiress as was the commodore's daughter.

Yet withal Celeste was in no wise spoiled.

She was a splendid equestrian, drove her pair of horses with great skill, and was an accomplished musician, and artist as well.

Her suitors she numbered by the score, and not one of them had ever won more than friendly regard from her in return for their devotion.

If Celeste Hartwell had a preference, not one of her admirers had found out who the fortunate one was.

She was popular with women as with men, and her deeds of charity among the poor were well known, though she made no ostentatious show of her generosity.

She lived in her grand home with her governess, and her servants.

Now and then she entertained handsomely, especially when her father was at home, but she gave out that she was still devoting herself to her studies, and thus avoided much society which otherwise would have been forced upon her.

One afternoon Celeste had met with quite an adventure.

She was driving alone on a road leading into the country, with a new pair of horses, a present to her from her father, when they became unmanageable.

In vain did she try to curb them, and at last, her strength giving out, she was yielding to the

situation, which might mean death for her, when a horseman dashed up, seized the bit of one of the horses and checking their mad spirit sprung to her side in the vehicle with the remark:

"Permit me to manage them for you, Miss Hartwell."

"With pleasure, sir, for I am completely exhausted."

He seized the reins, handled the animals in a masterly manner, and calling to his horse to follow, drove rapidly homeward.

"I owe you the deepest gratitude, sir, for they would have run away with me but for your kindness."

"You appear to know me, sir, while to me you are unknown," said Celeste, offering her hand.

"I am a Jew, Miss Hartwell, and my name is Emanuel Gripstein," was the response, and there seemed some bitterness in his words.

His dark eyes and hair were the only indications of his race, for his face did not have the Hebrew stamp, except in a very limited way.

He was very handsome, Celeste saw, had a superb physique and dressed with taste and elegance.

"May I ask, sir, if you are the brother of the beautiful Jewess, Miss Zaphiel Gripstein, whom I have often seen and admired?"

"Yes, Miss Hartwell, Zaphiel is my sister, and she refers to you just as you were kind enough to speak of her, as the beautiful Miss Hartwell."

"She will be glad to know that it has been my fortune to be of service to you."

"Will you not come in, Mr. Gripstein, for my governess will be glad to show her appreciation of your kindness."

"I thank you, but I must be on my way home," and he raised his hat in parting, when Celeste, with the sweet way that won hearts to her, held forth her hand, and remarked:

"It is only *au revoir*, Mr. Gripstein, for I shall hope to meet you again."

Emanuel Gripstein rode homeward in a meditative mood.

He had often seen Celeste, and always had admired her greatly.

But now, seeing her as he had done, and coming in contact with her, he felt that on his part it was a case of love at first sight.

He met her afterward when driving, and she had always bowed most cordially.

Once he had met her when he was riding with his sister, and she had drawn rein, with many of her admirers in view, and received an introduction to Zaphiel; but what Celeste Hartwell did, others less popular would not have dared do.

"Is she not beautiful, Zaphiel?" asked Emanuel, with enthusiasm as they rode on.

"Wondrously beautiful, and as lovely in character as in person, unless her face belies her heart."

"Do not fall in love with her, Emanuel, for it will bring only sorrow to you, I fear, my brother."

Emanuel sighed and made no reply.

After that there was a speaking acquaintance only between the heiress and the young Jew, but he loved her silently more and more each time he saw her.

So it was that he determined, upon knowing of the escape of the man who had attempted to kidnap her, to warn her to be upon her guard against danger.

He dared not write her openly, for he could express no fear for her safety without even the right of friendship between them for so doing.

But he would write to her anonymously, and he did so.

Since the departure of her father Celeste had not gone out a great deal, for the commodore had urged against it.

He had insisted upon increasing the number of servants at Overlook Lodge, as a greater protection against a surprise at night, and placed weapons where they could get them.

Being told that Moses Gripstein could give a reference regarding one of the servants, he had written that worthy and in response had received a note written in a bold hand which stated that the person in question was wholly unreliable and under no circumstances worthy of confidence.

The note though signed by Moses Gripstein had under it: "Per E. G."

Acting upon this the commodore had declined to employ the servant, and soon after Celeste saw an account of the very man being arrested for stealing.

When the anonymous note was received by her she read it over twice.

It was as follows:

"Feeling ever a deep interest in Miss Hartwell, though not included among her friends, I deem it my duty to make known to her that the leader of the party who would have kidnapped her, was released from prison last night under very peculiar circumstances."

"Being again free to concert mischief, I very much fear he may be only too willing to make a second attempt to carry out his design to kidnap Miss Hartwell, and thus gain a large ransom for her restoration to her home."

"I have reason to believe that the man is connected with a lawless band, and that he has friends his escape goes to prove."

"I beg then to urge upon Miss Hartwell the greatest caution in the guarding of her home by night, and when she ventures away on long drives and rides."

"I have the honor to be Miss Hartwell's
"UNKNOWN FRIEND."

Such was the anonymous note which Celeste read, and then, after some moments of thought, she sprung to her feet and went into the library.

Going to her father's desk she opened and began to glance over some piles of letters she found there.

At last she drew one from the pile, and examining it closely, mused aloud:

"Yes, E. G. stands for Emanuel Gripstein, and he wrote the letter for his uncle, and what he said about the man was true."

"Yes, this writing and that in the anonymous letter are written by the same hand."

"Mr. Gripstein dared not write me openly, so has kindly given me a warning anonymously."

"I will at least thank him; yes, and be on my guard, too."

That night Emanuel was startled by receiving the following letter:

"I beg to sincerely thank Mr. Gripstein for his anonymous warning, and shall be on my guard against the danger he deems threatening me."

"Again thanking Mr. Gripstein, I remain,

"With grateful regard,

"CELESTE HARTWELL."

And Emanuel nearly fretted himself ill wondering how Celeste had discovered that he wrote the anonymous letter.

CHAPTER XX.

SMUGGLER-HUNTING.

THE change which Claude Searle made in the little yacht at Hermitage Hall, greatly improved her speed and stanchness.

The two guns he had asked for and received, he secured from Portsmouth, and with his crew of bold young lads, he felt that the estate was well protected from any sea-raiders that might pounce down upon the place.

The people who cultivated the lands, and the fishermen, seemed far better pleased under the new management than ever before, and the commodore had been more than satisfied with the returns made him, and the reports of Overseer Searle.

The estate was therefore in a thriving condition and promised the most liberal income it had ever produced.

Mrs. Searle was contented in her new home, and if Helen fretted it was never known.

The young girl drove out with her mother, handling the reins herself, rode horseback all over the estate, fished, hunted with her brother and rowed and sailed in the yacht, while when indoors there was sewing to be done, books to read and certain duties in which she could help her mother.

Claude rode over the estate every few days, visiting the people, fished and hunted for sport and to supply the table, went to the fisheries upon the coast, sailed when he willed and spent his evenings at home looking over the accounts, reading and in conversation with his mother and sister.

Personal expenses they had none, his salary was most liberal, his percentage generous and he was making money and laying it up.

He still had the expression of mingled sternness and sadness which his earlier years had stamped there, but he was by no means morose, and ever had a smile and kindly word for those he came in contact with.

But it did not take a very close reader of human nature to know that he was a man with a history and one who carried a skeleton in his heart.

Such was the situation at Hermitage Hall at the time it was discovered in Boston that not only was the Evil Spirit not at the bottom of the sea, as many had fondly hoped, sent there by the guns of the fort, but she had been known to run in a large cargo of smuggled booty into Portland, which had been secretly landed and spirited away before any clew to it could be discovered.

People along the coast had been told to keep a close watch upon the smugglers, and a reward of ten thousand dollars had been offered for the capture of Black Brandt, his vessel, crew and land retreat, or the destruction of the Evil Spirit with all on board.

A notice of this reward had been sent to

"CLAUDE SEARLE, ESQ.,

"OVERSEER,

"HERMITAGE HALL,

"Coast of Maine."

"It would be a fortune for us, Claude, could you get it," Mrs. Searle had said when her son read the announcement.

"My dear mother," responded Claude, slowly, "you see only the destruction of outlaws, and a golden reward in the offer for me; but let us note the result."

"It would be blood money for lives taken, lawless though the men be, and I would never consent to take money for such work."

"True, true, my son, I never looked at it in that light."

"Then, mother, it is my duty, as an American, to protect her laws without a pecuniary reward, and should I be so fortunate as to capture Black Brandt and his vessel, my men should have every dollar of the ten thousand offered, for they are poor and need it, and do not regard the taking of the gold from the same standpoint that I do."

"And you would have the fame, brother," said Helen.

"The fame would be for Claude Searle, Helen, and who is he?" was the bitter reply, and it revealed the fact that the young sailor still felt kindly his dishonored name.

"Well, it will be that much more for the name of Claude Cassiday, when the clouds have drifted away and men know who Claude Searle is," was the cheery reply.

"You are a dear, good little sister, and it is so sweet and good in mother and you to be content to become hermits here and help me as you do."

"If I did not believe that some day the clouds would pass away, then life here would be unbearable."

"But now, mother, let me tell you that I have decided to go upon a cruise along the coast to try and capture Black Brandt, the smuggler."

"Where will you go, my son?" anxiously asked Mrs. Searle.

"Oh, along the coast from the Kennebec to the Penobscot, perhaps further."

"My plan is to cruise by night, lying in hiding by day, and thus hope to come across the smuggler."

"He is a desperate man, I take it, Claude."

"Doubtless, for he leads a desperate career."

"And has a large force."

"Hardly over twenty men, I believe, mother, from what I have heard, and I do not think he carries any guns, so in that I will have the advantage if I get within range."

"I have no fear of the result, once you meet him, if he is no stronger than you suppose," said Mrs. Searle.

"Mother, do you know I have a suspicion that Parson Black, who was here, was none other than Black Brandt?"

Mrs. Searle looked horrified, while Helen said, in a shocked tone:

"Oh, brother!"

"I verily believe it; and more, I have met the man somewhere before."

"He told us that he was going on his circuit toward Portland, and for the life of me I could not like or respect the man."

"So I left early in the morning, you remember, and went hunting."

"Now, several hours after, he passed within sight of me, smoking a cigar, which he denounced here as a crime, you remember, and he went into the wild country toward the coast, where there is not a known habitation, and only wild beasts to convert."

"I hope you are wrong, Claude, for he seemed very pious."

"He was too pious, and his voice had a whine in it that was put on, I am sure."

"Then he was Parson Black, and his complexion was that of a sailor, and more of a man much younger than to have the gray hair he did, and which I noticed was a wig."

"On, Claude!"

"Well, mother, if I capture Black Brandt, see if I do not find in him Parson Black, spectacles, wig and all; but I must sail to-night, for the Sea Cloud is ready," and soon after Claude bade his mother and sister farewell, and going on board of the pretty little Sea Cloud, got up sail and stood out to sea, with no light visible upon his deck.

He had started upon a smuggler-hunt, and had his full crew along.

CHAPTER XXI.

A LONE MARINER.

ABOVE the secret rendezvous of Black Brandt the smuggler, far upon a rock away up over the waters of the basin, a sentinel was kept on watch by day and by night.

By day he reported every vessel in sight, and by night, should either the Evil Spirit, or the Jack-o'-lantern, as the smuggler sloop was called, be in sight they could only run in when they signaled for the beacons to be shown.

By day the entrance to the basin could be made by observing three rocks to steer by, while at night on each of these three points a lantern would be lighted and placed, but only when a signal off-shore demanded it, or one of the craft running out hauled for the beacons to be set, for the exit was as dangerous as the coming in.

Only the coolest nerve and most skillful pilot could bring the vessels in by day, and by night, in rough weather, the feat had never been attempted but once, and the loss of the daring helmsman's craft was the result.

At only a certain distance off-shore could the three beacons be seen, so that should they be set for the smuggler craft they would not be discerned, far up on the rocks, by a ship further out at sea.

With this explanation of the entrance to the

smuggler retreat, I will give the reader a glance at the inner workings of the lawless rendezvous, or stronghold.

After having discovered that he was believed to have been sunk, from the fire of the fort in Boston Bay, Black Brandt determined to lie close for a while and further carry out the impression that he was dead.

There were no foreign vessels expected just then, with smuggled booty on board for him, and he had little at the retreat to send in, so he could well afford to rest for a few weeks.

He had pleasant quarters ashore, up among the rocks and pines, and he had about him all to make life comfortable.

He was a man of luxurious tastes, and of a superior education.

All his life he had been a student, in spite of his escapades as a youth, and his evil deeds of the later years of his life.

A perfect sailor, he was also a man of accomplishments, possessing a rich-toned voice in song, and playing several instruments with skill and feeling.

He was a linguist as well, and could draw and paint with no mean hand, while he passed much time in sketching from nature, and life.

His vessels, his surroundings and every member of his band had been pictured and caricatured as well.

Plenty of books he had also, and fond of works of art he kept them about him for his own pleasure, both in his cabin aboard ship and his home ashore.

His fancy for weapons he gratified by sending to foreign lands for guns, pistols and swords, until he had a large collection around him.

His cabin had a broad shelter in front of it, so that in wet weather, or when the sun was pouring down its rays, he could swing there in his hammock reading and smoking at will.

It had been his rule never to let his whole face be seen by his people, and he had his half mask on as he swung there in his hammock one pleasant afternoon reading, and with a cigar between his lips, for the chief had learned to be an inveterate smoker while a buccaneer in West Indian waters.

It was in the afternoon and an Indian of the Kennebec tribe was cooking dinner for the chief.

This Indian was a devoted slave to Black Brandt, who had rescued him from a crowd of drunken seamen one day in port, whither the smuggler had gone with a cargo of goods.

The red-skin turned out to be a chief, and with half a dozen of his braves left his camp and followed Black Brandt.

The chief was installed as cook and valet when Brandt was ashore, and a good one he made, and his braves were the lookouts and guards of the retreat, and in such service they were sleepless and ever watchful.

The Kennebec chief and four of his warriors were the guards of the retreat, and they were as faithful as they could be.

Several others went upon the vessels and were good seamen and utterly fearless.

Suddenly, as though apparently from the clouds, came a shrill peculiar call.

It sounded like the cry of some wild bird.

The Kennebec started, and raising his eyes to ward the lofty, overhanging rocks, repeated the cry, while Black Brandt laid aside his book and rose from his hammock.

Again the cry was repeated, and then Black Brandt called out:

"Ho, the lookout!"

"Oh, yes!" came the response, from the Indian on watch.

"What is it?"

"Small boat come."

"How large a craft?"

"Heap little, one man in," was the reply.

"Is he far off?"

"Big gun hit him easy."

"Is he heading down the coast?"

"He come this way."

"We have no man out who knows where to find us—I will have a look at him," and so saying the smuggler chief climbed the rocks to the place where the Indian sentinel sat among a clump of pines.

There was a spy-glass there, and Black Brandt turned it upon a boat he saw about half a league away off-shore.

It was a cat-rig, with broad beam and about twenty feet long.

The single sail was reefed, for the wind was high and the sea ran rough, breaking against the rocks with a thunderous roar.

In the boat could be seen but one man, and he was managing his little craft well in the rough sea and stiff breeze.

That he was edging in toward the Blind Bay, beyond which was the basin and retreat of the smuggler, Black Brandt saw at a glance.

At last, when she got off the entrance to the basin, the boat suddenly changed her course, the boom was hauled well up by the tapping-light, and the lone mariner put the craft directly before the wind.

"By Heaven, but he is coming in, or going to make the attempt, at least."

"He either has too much wind and wave for his boat, and hopes to find an anchorage in

Blind Bay, and wait for calmness of weather, or he knows the retreat and is running for it.

"I will soon know," watching the little craft attentively, Black Brandt saw her cross the Blind Bay, holding directly toward the channel into the secret basin.

He soon changed his course, pointing due south, and at once Black Brandt called out:

"Yes, that man knows the way in."

"He is one of us, or he would never come here alone."

"I will meet him as he lands, but who he can be I cannot even guess."

Down the steep path went the smuggler captain, and when he reached the shore he saw the little cat rig shoot into the basin and hold straight on for the mouth of the stream in which the Evil Spirit and Jack-o'-lantern were anchored.

CHAPTER XXII.

NICK THE KIDNAPPER.

As the smuggler chief saw that the lone sailor was coming to the retreat, he returned to his place on the piazza of his cabin, taking a seat in a ship chair and awaiting his coming.

Soon the man appeared coming up the path, and Black Brandt muttered:

"Yes, it is Nick the kidnapper."

"The old Jew acted promptly, as he always does where his interest is concerned."

The man approached slowly, climbing with some difficulty, and as he drew nearer his face was seen to be white and haggard.

He saluted the chief politely, and the latter said:

"Well, Nick, you look used up."

"Had a hard time of it, I guess?"

"Yes, chief, harder than you may think, for I have been expecting to be hanged, as my trial would have been but a mockery."

"The way of the transgressor is hard, Nick," said Black Brandt, with a laugh, and then he added, calling to the Indian:

"Casco, get a glass of brandy here quick."

The Indian obeyed, and the sailor dashed it off at a gulp.

"Now, Nick, tell me how it was that you failed in the work I sent you on?"

"Has not Hewitt told you, sir?"

"Ah, yes, he jumped overboard and swam ashore, after which he hid for a couple of days, and then made his way here."

"But Hewitt was not the one I placed in charge, Nick."

"True, sir, so I will tell you all that occurred."

"I also have seen the account in the paper, while, when last in Boston, I heard various accounts of it; but yours is the story I wish to hear."

"Yes, sir; but you have been in Boston, then?"

"Had I not been, Nick, you would have never gotten away."

"Did you plan for my rescue, sir?"

"Of course, for though you failed me I would not leave you to die at the rope end."

"But I got away before your rescue was attempted, chief."

"How did you get away?"

Nick looked about him and shuddered, while he answered in a low tone:

"My namesake freed me, sir."

"Your namesake?"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't understand."

"Old Nick, sir."

"Who is Old Nick?"

"The devil, sir!" blurted out the sailor.

"Ah! the devil released you, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then the old adage is true that Satan takes care of his own?"

"I'll tell you about it, sir, and I have not gotten over the fright yet."

"First, let me hear your report."

"Well, chief, I had all as well planned as I could wish, only I found two of my men rather hard to manage, and they were more anxious to get the plunder than the girl."

"I see."

"But they met their quietus very suddenly."

"It was through their talk, while waiting for me—"

"Where were you?"

"I had gone to run the little smack up close ashore, near the commodore's home, and Hewitt was with me."

"The other two were to meet me near the cottage of that young ex-pirate, Claude Cassiday, which was deserted."

"But they stood there waiting for me, while the young sailor happened to be home, and heard it all."

"He's game, or he would never have attempted to bag three men alone, which he did do; to his credit I say it, sir."

"Yes, he is utterly fearless, as I have had reason to know."

"You have met him then, sir?"

"Yes."

"He is as quick as lightning and strong as a lion."

"Yes."

"Well, sir, we got into the house and he followed us."

"We found the ladies in the room up-stairs, and I had all arranged to render them unconscious with the drug, had they been asleep."

"But they had not retired, so we had to do the best we could."

"The old lady shouted, and one of my men struck her a severe blow, I was sorry to see, and as she fell stunned, threw the cloth saturated with the drug over her head."

"I seized the heiress and enveloped her in a blanket, but could not get my men away without plundering, and that delayed us."

"When we did start, carrying the lady, we were called to a halt as we descended the stairs by some one in the hall."

"My men opened fire and young Cassiday returned it, for he it was, and he fired but two shots."

"There was no need for more."

"No, chief, he hit dead center each shot, and was upon me with the spring of a panther."

"I am a strong man, as you know, sir, but he handled me like a child, tore the lady from me and bad me down, his foot upon my throat, and a moment after securely bound."

"He then left the lady on guard over me, as the servants were around, and went off after officers, who quickly lodged me in jail."

"As for Cassiday, he sneaked out of the affair as though he had done something mean, and when he ought to marry the girl for his act in her defense."

"Yes, he left the town at once, I believe."

"So I heard in jail, sir, and because he had gotten into some trouble aboard ship, I heard."

"But he is a dandy, chief, and I wish you would make him first officer under you, as I respect a man who did what I saw him do, and can handle me as he did."

"The berth is open to him, Nick, if he will accept it, for I own I would be more than happy to have Mr. Cassiday my lieutenant."

"But it will never be."

"You think so, sir?"

"I know it."

"He was in hard luck they said, sir."

"Yes, so I heard."

"And a man in hard luck often turns to the bad."

"Yes, often."

"And he is out of service now for having got mixed as to whom some money belonged to, I heard."

"Yes, but I do not believe that he was guilty, Nick."

"You do not, sir?"

"No, for he is not the man to do a mean action."

"He don't look to be, sir."

"No, there are many honorable men in the world, Nick, if you and I are rascals, and young Cassiday may be accused of wrong, but I am sure the accusation is a false one."

"But to your story."

"Yes, sir, they lodged me in jail, and there was talk of taking me out and hanging me, giving me my trial afterwards."

"It would have been the safest way to have punished you, Nick."

"Yes, sir; but that is a strong jail and the people cooled off after a look at it, so I was set down for trial, and in a few days I was told it was known that I had been one of the Road Bandits between New York and Boston, and also a pirate and all else that was mean."

"In fact, chief, if I had waited to be tried I would have been hanged for a dozen crimes other than kidnapping."

"Sc I feared, Nick, so bad you rescued."

"But you did not rescue me, sir."

"Who did then?"

"The devil," was the cool response.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SATAN AS AN ALLY.

"WELL, Nick, you seem to have had a funny experience indeed, to lay your rescue to Satan; but go on with your story, for when it is finished I have something to tell you," said Black Brandt, after laughing at the earnest manner in which the kidnapper had alluded to Satan as his Patron Saint.

"Well, chief, I made the failure, as you know, to kidnap the lady, and got myself in jail for punishment."

"I had a hard time of it then, as you may see, sir, by looking at me, and looked forward to my trial as only a legal way of putting me to death."

"But you would have saved yourself in the end by betraying me," and the chief looked the man straight in the eyes.

But Nick did not flinch, in fact his face flushed with indignation as he said:

"I am not made of that kind of material, Captain Brandt."

"I would never save my own neck by betraying my comrades, great sinner that I am."

"No, sir, wild horses could not have dragged from me the secret which I could have saved my life by divulging."

The chief rose quickly and held forth his hand, while he said earnestly:

"I beg your pardon, Nick, for I confess that I did doubt you."

"More, I frankly tell you that I arranged for your rescue fearing you would escape with your life by betraying us."

"Next time you get into a scrape I will save you for your own honest self—there's my hand upon it."

Nick grasped the hand of the chief and replied:

"You are frank, sir, and I appreciate what you say; but whatever you may have arranged to save me, you did not accomplish it."

"Who did then?"

"As I told you, sir, Satan did."

Again Black Brandt laughed, while he said:

"Tell me of your Satanic friend, Nick."

"I will, sir."

"I was asleep in my cell, when I was awakened by the key turning in the lock."

"I saw Sledge, the giant guard, as he is called, and with him a slender form in a long black shining cloak, reaching to his heels."

"I could not see even his face—and heard Sledge say in a voice that trembled:

"You are wanted."

"Who by?" I asked in great terror.

"Your namesake, Old Nick," assured Sledge, and I naturally supposed I was to be taken out and killed.

"I put as bold a front on as I could and went out with them, determined, as I was freed of my irons, to die fighting."

"It was pouring rain, and crossing the jail yard we reached the gate."

"There the cloaked form gave Sledge some orders, and I could see that the guard was terribly frightened.

"The idea came to me then that I was being rescued, that Sledge was scared at being bribed, and I saw the man in the cloak take something from his pocket, tell the guard to hold out his tongue and put a powder upon it."

"Nonsense!"

"It is all true as Gospil, chief."

"Go on."

"You do not believe me."

"I am deeply interested in your story, Nick."

"So am I, sir," was the earnest reply.

Then Nick continued:

"The stranger in the long cloak led the way, grasping my arms, and had I wished to break away from him and escape I seemed not to have the power."

"He seemed to hold me by some power I could not resist."

"I spoke to him time and time again, but he made no reply."

"I then noticed that he walked along in a noiseless manner, and yet kept his grip upon me."

"He led me through the town, avoiding the street lamps, and down to the shore, among the rocks, when to my surprise I saw a horse saddled and bridled awaiting me."

"He then spoke, telling me there was a disguise in the saddle-bags and food, and to go."

"I hesitated to learn something about my rescuer, when he threw his arms open, revealing a form I shall never forget," and the sailor shuddered.

"His hands were claws, sir, and his black cloak were wings of a bright scarlet on the inside."

"He was clad in red, fitting close, with huge keys hanging to his belt, and his long sharp nose and chin nearly met, while upon his ears were short horns, and his ears were long and pointed."

"How did you see all this in the dark, Nick?"

"By the two lanterns he held, one in each hand, casting a yellow and green light directly upon him."

"I tell you, chief, it was the devil himself and he did not have to again tell me to go."

"I went at the full speed of my horse for miles."

"I halted at dawn and changed my clothes for those found in the saddle-bags."

"There was food there too, but I was not hungry for it, as I had no desire to eat victuals cooked down yonder," and Nick pointed down in the direction in which Hades is supposed to lie.

chance to get stores, I would not touch that food, and have it still in the saddle-bags.

"I went three days without food and water, but here I am."

"My poor fellow, you have done your best, and I will prove it by giving you another chance at kidnapping."

"But now dinner is ready, and you must have some food, only eat sparingly at first."

"I thank you, chief, and I believe next time I can kidnap the lady without fail."

"It is not the same one this time, Nick."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, I will get you to kidnap another fair lady for me, and one who will bring just as large a sum for ransom, I am sure."

"But let me tell you a secret."

"Yes, chief."

"The young sailor who thwarted you is living at Hermitage Hall."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, he is there with his mother and sister, and they are under an assumed name."

"What is he there for, I wonder?"

"As overseer of the estate for Commodore Hartwell."

"Ah!"

"But that is not his real motive, Nick, I am sure."

"Yes, sir."

"He is there to capture our band, I am sure," was the reply of the smuggler captain, and Nick quickly answered:

"We must look sharp, sir, for he's the man to do it."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SEA CLOUD.

THE Sea Cloud looked innocent enough, creeping along the coast by night, and at a short distance might be taken for a coaster on a trading voyage.

But a closer inspection would have revealed as trim a craft as one might see on a run from the St. Lawrence to the Rio Grande.

Her schooner rig fitted her well, and she could show a great deal of canvas when need called for it.

Her decks were in perfect trim, the crew neatly clad and a daring lot of young sailors as one would wish to back him in an enterprise of danger.

Forward and aft, under a canvas cover were two guns, brass twelve-pounders, which could be wheeled from one part of the schooner to the other in a minute of time, and the bulwarks were pierced for three guns to a broadside, forward, amidships and aft.

Then both of the cannon could be used forward as bow chasers, or aft on the defensive if the vessel had to run for it.

The crew had been drilled to perfection, and in this the past career of Claude Searle came to his aid.

There were two dozen boarding-pikes, twice as many muskets and pistols, as many cutlasses also, and the crew had been taught well to handle them.

The hull of the schooner had been painted snow white, her spars also, and with her snowy canvas set she looked indeed to have been properly named—Sea Cloud—as she flew over the waters.

Her quarters were most comfortable, having been built for a yacht, and her cabin was roomy and luxurious.

Such was the little vessel under Claude Searle's command, and dressed in a neat white uniform, his crew also in snowy silver garb, the craft might have been taken for a king's yacht.

It was the intention of Claude Searle to find the black phantom craft of the smuggler, and stick to her until he had captured her, or run her down.

Could he do this, his next move would be to find the stronghold of the smugglers, and thus break up their lawless career upon the coast of Maine.

He had an idea that the Evil Spirit was more than a smuggler craft, that, when good opportunity offered she was guilty of piracy, and these suspicions were founded upon certain information that had come to his ears.

Convinced that "Parson Black" was none other than Black Brandt, he was sure that he had come to Hermitage Hall for some purpose of evil.

Claude was therefore more anxious to capture the smuggler before he could do any injury to the estate, or those he loved so dearly.

He did not expect to find the Evil Spirit upon his first cruise in search of her, nor on his second or third, perhaps, though he might do so.

Still, he would cruise for a week of each month, and in time success must come to him, for every time he went he would acquaint himself more thoroughly with some part of the bold coast, so well suited for the hiding-place of lawless bands.

His first cruise was to be by night, as has been said.

Coming out from some retreat where he had found a harborage by day he would cruise along the coast until near dawn and seek another haven.

During the day, from points of lookout ashore he would keep lookouts on the watch, and should the Evil Spirit be seen he could rush out upon her with the Sea Cloud.

Once he got within range he hoped to cripple her before she could outfoot him, for he was sure from all he heard, that the smuggler's Black Phantom, as the sable craft was often called, could run away in a fair chase from any vessel afloat.

But by a sea ambush, for the Evil Spirit always kept close inshore, he might pounce upon her at an unguarded moment and cripple her with his guns before she could get away.

Then, by night, if he sighted her, she would doubtless be within range, and altogether Claude Searle felt hopeful of victory.

The fact that the crew of the Evil Spirit was fully equal to his own, and even might outnumber him, while they were naturally a desperate lot, did not cause Claude any uneasiness whatever.

He was one who felt that one man was another's equal, judging from his own standpoint, with himself as a criterion.

His own lads he knew were bold sailors and none better, and they were fearless while they had confidence in him as a leader.

He had drilled them with the guns and in the use of firearms, blades and pikes, also in boarding a vessel, and the quick handling of their own and he knew he could depend upon them.

Then, too, he had told them that every dollar of the reward offered should be divided among them, he not taking a dollar, while the prize-money would amount to considerable, and in that the men should share as well as himself, on terms that prizes captured by naval vessels were divided.

Such was the feeling with which the Sea Cloud started upon her mission, and the crew were all upon the alert for the capture of the smuggler.

By day they made up the sleep lost in the night cruises, and also drilled regularly, so as to keep in practice.

Two mates, a boatswain, cook and twenty seamen was what the crew numbered, and Claude did not believe the black three-masted schooner of the smugglers carried a heavier force, while he had never heard that she had any guns.

If she did have, they were kept out of sight in the hold, and if surprised by him, under fire of his guns it would not be an easy task to get them on deck and into action.

"If I can only capture Black Brandt, his vessel and stronghold, it will be a good thing for Claude Searle, and one of these days, when I can resume my tarnished name, it will be but that more to add to the credit of Claude Cassiday," he argued to himself.

It was the seventh night of cruising, and when the Sea Cloud ran out of the haven where she had been in hiding, she found a terrific sea running outside and a gale blowing.

Claude knew that it was rough weather, but when he got out to sea he saw that it was not only worse than he had expected, but there was every prospect that the gale was increasing to a tempest.

He was about to put back when the lookout cried in a startled tone:

"Sail ho! the Black Phantom ho!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CHASE IN A TEMPEST.

The startling cry of the lookout forward on the Sea Cloud caused a thrill to pass through the hearts of all on board.

A wild sea was running shoreward, and the surf broke furiously against the rocky coast.

The Sea Cloud was yet under the lee of a rocky island some distance seaward, and Claude Searle would have put back for shelter, not wishing to subject his vessel and crew to such punishment as a night's battle with a severe tempest without cause for it.

The little vessel, with hatches down, guns and boats lashed, was driving her sharp nose into the big waves, while she had only fore-staysail and mainsail set with double reef.

But just as Claude had given the order to go about and run back for the shelter of the land-locked harborage, the lookout sighted the black three-master.

It was seen by a flash of lightning driving along under reefed mizzen sail and staysails, and running parallel with the coast.

She was almost in the breakers of the rocky island, so close was she cutting it, and her course was down the coast.

When all was darkness again the black schooner was nowhere visible to the eyes strained in search of her.

But the schooner was held straight on seaward, pointing according to the lookout's report, straight toward where he had seen the noble stranger.

"All eyes on watch for the black schooner at the next lightning's flash," cried Claude.

A moment passed away, and as the schooner's bow rose on a large wave, there arose a chorus of voices:

"There she flies!"

"I see her," said Claude, and all eyes were

strained over the black sea, doubly black now after the flash of lightning.

The Evil Spirit had been seen about half a mile away, and just at the edge of the rock island, which she was not a cable's length distant from, it seemed.

"There is a channel out to sea at the other end of the island, you said, Romer?" called out Claude to his first-mate.

"Yes, sir."

"I will go to sea through it," was the stern reply, and the bows of the Sea Cloud swept round, and with the wind upon her port beam, she went tearing along at a splendid pace.

All saw the wisdom of the young commander's act, for to have held on beating out to sea around the end of the rocky island which the Evil Spirit was then abreast of, would bring them when in her wake, fully two miles astern.

On the other hand, the rocky island was over a mile in length, and it afforded a lee that gave the Sea Cloud much smoother sailing than had the smuggler craft, rough though it was.

Her change of course put her also level with the black schooner, and when she reached the channel to take her out to sea, if she sailed as rapidly as did the Evil Spirit, she would have to point closer to the wind for half a mile, and then be hardly an eighth of a mile astern.

Such was Claude's quick calculation of the situation, and the Sea Cloud was driving along a moment after his order was given to change her course.

That there should be no doubt about holding his own with the flying Black Phantom, Claude, while in smoother water, determined to carry more sail, and in addition to the fore-staysail and single reefed mainsail then set, he ordered the jib and single reefed foresail run up.

This additional canvas sent the Sea Cloud along at what seemed a frightful pace.

She heeled over to an alarming angle, and the hull seemed half the time under water, for she drove through the waves like a flash.

Another flash of lightning revealed the Evil Spirit over the low rock island just abeam, and in a straight direction not over a third of a mile distant.

She certainly was a flying marvel to hold her own with the Sea Cloud with what sail she had set.

Every eye was upon Claude Cassiday, who had now taken the helm of his vessel himself.

All knew that the Sea Cloud was being driven to her utmost, but would the young skipper continue to drive her at the same terrific pace when the end of the island was reached and the channel passed through, was a question each man anxiously asked himself.

The storm was increasing in violence each moment, and as the end of the rocky island was just off the bows the eyes of all anxiously turned upon Claude just as his lips parted with the order:

"Lower away jib and foresail, and furl close!"

Down the sails came on the run, and the sharp bows of the Sea Cloud were pointed up through the channel just as a flash of lightning revealed the black schooner tearing along like a whirlwind, and at the moment of the change in the Sea Cloud's course just abeam of her.

If the Sea Cloud had been discovered by those on board the Evil Spirit there was no sign of it yet, for she still flew along, just outside the wild breakers that were hurled against the chain of reefs and rock islands there serving as a lee for the coast a league away.

With the rock island no longer serving as a lee for her, the Sea Cloud got all the fearful force of the waves and winds and at first she seemed staggered by the work cut out for her to do.

But Claude Cassiday eased her helm in a masterly manner, and kept her hard down to her work.

Her deck was swept by torrents of water, and now and then a huge wave would tumble aboard with a shock that made the stanch little craft tremble as though in terror.

But she would shake off the water, and rising to her task, would dive through the next wave in splendid style.

So it went on until she had gained an offing, and could stand away in the wake of the Evil Spirit.

The sheet was eased off, the fore-staysail also, and with the wind abeam she drove along, taking the seas broadside-to as they rushed shoreward.

Great giant seas they were, too, now raising the schooner high upon their crests, and then sending her down, down into the valley of waters until the wave-tops were far above her decks.

The storm increased each moment in fury, until it was feared that the mainsail would have to be lowered and reefed down.

But Claude Searle gave no order to shorten sail, still holding on in the wake of the Evil Spirit, now an eighth of a mile ahead of him, and which was, without doubt, steadily gaining upon him.

This fact the lightning flashes, each moment becoming more frequent, revealed to the eye of every man on board the Sea Cloud.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DRIVEN TO DOOM.

CLAUDE SEARLE was in a quandary. The Evil Spirit was certainly running away from him, thus keeping up her record as a phenomenally fleet craft.

She had up no more sail than the Sea Cloud, yet was larger, and now drew away from her pursuer.

Whether the crew of the Evil Spirit had yet sighted the Sea Cloud, Claude did not know; they showed no indication of having done so.

The black schooner held upon the same course as when discovered, along the coast, just clearing the outer reefs and passing through the breakers at times as though in defiance of danger.

She cut through the wild seas, standing up well under the pressure, with the wind abeam, and drove along at a speed that was sending her a mile to the Sea Cloud's three-quarters.

Claude Searle looked the matter squarely in the face. At that pace the black schooner would run the white one out of sight before dawn, if both held on.

His own craft was staggering in seas that were dangerous in the extreme, for so small a boat; but for the presence of the Black Phantom he would not have risked his craft and crew.

The seas were getting wilder, the wind increasing until it blew fully forty miles an hour.

Yet the Evil Spirit, almost within his grasp, was drawing away from him slowly and surely.

Did he dare set more sail?

That was a question he debated for some time, and then decided that he would.

"Mr. Romer, run up her jib, and see if it will keep her nose up a little out of the seas," he ordered.

Mate Romer obeyed, and as the wind was now more over the quarter, the jib dragged the schooner along at a swifter pace.

"She certainly holds her own now, Romer," said Claude, watching the Evil Spirit closely.

"She is doing it, sir, without a doubt," was the cheerful answer.

"Give her the foresail reefed down."

"You think she will stand it, sir?" anxiously asked Mate Romer.

"She must, for we must catch yonder black phantom of the coast," was the stern reply.

"The foresail, reefed down, was raised, and its influence was felt at once. In fact every inch of canvas told in that gale.

The Sea Cloud sprung forward under it like a frightened thing of life. She reeled badly at first, but soon became more steady, and her young skipper held her manfully to her perilous and terrible work, winning the admiration of his officers and crew by his masterly handling of his vessel.

"She is gaining!" came in a chorus from forward.

It was true, the extra canvas seemed to fairly lift the Sea Cloud along at a lightning pace, and a few minutes told the story, that she was gaining upon the Black Phantom, though slowly.

Still she was gaining, and it showed, with what canvas she had up, and speedy as she was, what a wonderful flyer the Evil Spirit was.

Not a quarter of a mile now separated the two vessels.

But as all had their eyes upon the Evil Spirit, which still held to fore-staysail and mizzen-sail reefed down, a jib was then seen to run up, then the foresail reefed down, followed a moment after by the mainsail with double reefs.

The effect seemed like magic, for though the Evil Spirit felt the canvas in a way that heeled her over to a startling angle, yet she seemed to jump from the sea and fly along the wild waves, apparently upon the crests of the towering breakers.

"She is running away from us like a scared rabbit, sir," cried Mate Romer, and instantly came the command:

"Unlash those two bull-pups, lads, and let them bark!"

A cheer came from the crew, for they now had a chance to use their guns for the first time.

The two cannons were unashed, run forward, loaded and fired in spite of the torrents of water flooding the decks and almost driving into the muzzles of the guns.

When the Sea Cloud rose well upon a wave crest they thundered forth.

Boom! boom! they roared and the shrieking shots went flying after the Black Phantom.

"Keep it up, lads!" shouted Skipper Searle. His clear, thrilling voice reached the gunners, who, with lifelines made fast to them, and the guns lashed so as to allow of but a slight rebound, stood manfully up to their work.

Again and again the guns roared, the red glare flashing back in the face of the vivid lightning, which was now incessant, and their deep voices rivaling the booming of the thunder.

It was a wild, awful, appalling scene, there in the raging sea, tempest swept and toppling mountains of water, the black masses of clouds, blinding lightning, pealing thunder, shrieking winds and the roaring of the guns, mingling with the

defiant shouts of the crew, struggling like fiends infernal, blind to danger now, to see those two vessels rushing along like frightened storm-birds, the one to escape, the other to destroy.

"My God! what a scene!"

"In all my varied life I never saw its like," cried Captain Claude, as he glanced about him, above him, at his vessel with the gunners forward, and on to the Black Phantom flying ahead, her sable hull, rig and sails as black as night, and her crew, clad in black, standing grimly at their guns, all lit up by the incessantly flashing lightning.

"If we cannot catch the Black Phantom, we must destroy her!" shouted Searle to his crew.

But, almost instantly came the loud command:

"Cease firing! She is hard hit and doomed!"

This order was caused by seeing the Evil Spirit suddenly fall off, broadside to the Sea Cloud, as though she had been hurt in her steering gear; but, the next instant, she went driving away before the gale straight for the coast!

"She is crippled and is running for a harborage," cried Searle.

"There is no harbor there, sir, only a rocky cliff for leagues, with reefs and a submerged rock island extending a mile off the coast," said Mate Romer.

"Then we have driven her to her doom," was the rejoinder of Skipper Searle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AFTER THE CHASE.

THE Sea Cloud had held on after the strange maneuver of the Evil Spirit, her guns having ceased firing and been again lashed fast.

Claude gave orders to lower away the jib and foresail, and reaching the locality where the Evil Spirit had put away before the wind he did the same.

It was dangerous work sailing before the gale in such a sea, for so small a craft, but Captain Claude knew himself, his vessel and his crew, and was confident.

There drove the Black Phantom with the same sail set, rushing straight for the bold rock-bound coast, as though preferring destruction to capture.

"There is no haven on this coast for miles, you say, Romer?"

"No, captain, not from where we came out and sighted the Black Phantom, for several leagues beyond where we now are."

"The coast is a succession of cliffs, with Blind Bay near where we now are, and reef and rock islands, as I told you, running out for a mile or more all along."

"How far are we from the coast do you think?"

"Half a league, sir, for you see what the lightning reveals?"

"Yes, and the black schooner must soon strike, there?"

"Within ten minutes at furthest, sir."

"We will hold on then until she strikes, and after that go about and beat off."

"Ay, ay, sir."

All eyes were now bent upon the sable schooner nearly a mile ahead, and which the lightning, almost incessantly flashing, kept distinctly in view.

The crew of the Sea Cloud no longer felt any anxiety about their vessel. They had seen her tried in the worst of seas and storms and knew her to be as buoyant as a cork, as safe as a frigate.

Their young captain had been put to the test, and he was cool, resolute, and skillful, so they had no dread for themselves.

So they all watched the black schooner.

On she flew, straight for the coast, which looked appalling in the lightning's glare.

On followed the Sea Cloud, directly in her wake.

Suddenly the black schooner was seen to wear around, and she seemed about to beat out again.

But she staggered terribly, and the cry arose from the men:

"She is crippled! She is crippled!"

For a short while she struggled, then fell off again before the gale, and, after a short run, came round as though to run along the coast, or to beat out upon the other tack.

But again the bows swept back and once more before the wind she drove along directly for the cliffs.

"Nothing can save her now, for she is in the midst of the reefs!" cried Officer Romer.

"We will put about, Mr. Romer," cried Claude, and the schooner's bow was brought around and she began to eat into the teeth of the gale, just as a terrific crash of thunder came, following a sheet of livid flame that lit up sky, sea and iron-bound coast.

When the eyes of the crew on the Sea Cloud could see once more after the blinding glare, there came in a chorus:

"The Black Phantom has dashed against the cliff!"

Keeping his glass to his eyes, Claude Searle looked searchingly shoreward for a long while, taking advantage of any flash of lightning.

But not a vestige of the Evil Spirit was seen, and he once more took the helm and devoted his whole attention to the safety of his own vessel, for in the teeth of such a tempest the Sea Cloud was barely edging off-shore.

The foresail was set, reefed down, and by the nicest of steering the Sea Cloud began to do better; and yet it was long before all felt easy as to her safety.

After midnight the storm spent its fury, the wind dropped to half a gale, and the stars shone out.

A couple of hours more and the Sea Cloud was three leagues off-shore, and not in the least distressed by the sea then running.

Dawn came at last, after a long, fearful night of it, and the sun rose in a clear sky.

The gale had dropped to a ten-knot steady breeze, the sea was running down rapidly, and the Sea Cloud was put back for the shore.

Not a man had left the deck all through the terrible night, and each one now felt confidence in his captain, himself and his ship.

The wind wore around after sunrise and came off-shore, and by the time the Sea Cloud had reached the scene off the coast, where she could clearly examine the shores, the sea was smooth, the bold cliffs formed a lee that made the waters like a mill-pond outside of the line of breakers that dashed upon the reef outside.

Claude Searle went aloft with his glass, and as the Sea Cloud moved slowly along, examined the cliffs with the closest scrutiny.

He soon after let go an anchor and taking a boat rowed along for a league; but not a break could he see in the walls of rocks.

"You still think the black craft may have found a haven, sir?" asked Mate Romer as he returned to the schooner.

"Yes, for I know of just such coasts that have inlets forming safe harbors: but I begin to feel that the Evil Spirit went to her destruction last night."

"There is no doubt of it, sir, for not a man aboard the Sea Cloud here but will tell you that for several leagues in each direction from where we now are there is not a basin large enough to moor a surf-skiff in safety."

"Well, Mate Romer, we will get the Sea Cloud under all sail and head for home."

The boatswain's shrill whistle sent the men to work in a hurry, and looking indeed like a cloud of snow the beautiful vessel went on her homeward run, driven by a six-knot breeze off-shore.

The sun was just rising the following morning when she dropped anchor in the harbor of Hermitage Hall, and Claude was met at the wharf by his mother and sister who gave him a joyous welcome home, for they had been most anxious about him they were compelled to admit.

The little schooner showed the effects of the storm in many ways, but Claude bade the crew to seek the rest they so much needed before going to work to get her in trim once more, and putting a fisherman in charge allowed all to go to their homes to tell the story of their cruise.

And to his mother and sister he told the story and added:

"I never saw but one other man who could handle a craft as that smuggler chief did, and that was Kent the Buccaneer; but now I must write my report and dispatch it to Commodore Hartwell, telling him that my next duty will be to find the Smuggler's Retreat."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ZAPHIEL'S SECRET.

COMMODORE HARTWELL'S flagship happened to be in Boston Bay, when the report from his trusted overseer Claude Searle was received, and the news was at once given to the papers for publication.

The news was received with delight, for it was supposed that now there would be an end to smuggling along the coast, which many believed concealed acts of piracy as well.

The blow hit hardest in the home of Moses Gripstein.

That worthy read the paper, giving the account of the destruction of the Black Phantom and went to his room up-stairs almost ill.

"The vessel was loaded mit booty, and I was lose so much, so much," he groaned.

But a greater shock came to him when he saw the effect of the news upon Zaphiel.

She sunk away in a swoon, when she heard that Black Brandt was dead, beyond all doubt, and it was long before she revived.

The weakness of Moses Gripstein was his devotion to his daughter, one whom he loved more than all his riches.

He saw with utter amazement the deep emotion of Zaphiel and he was almost in despair.

He recalled how she had spoken of the smuggler chief, and admired him, not knowing that he was an outlaw.

He remembered that she had always been on hand to let him into the house when he came, and his avaricious old heart was wrung with anguish at the thought that she was in love with the outlaw, and glad he was that he had come to his death rather than that Zaphiel should meet such a destiny as wedding a buccaneer.

When she awoke from a sleep, into which she had fallen after her swoon, she found her father pacing the room with noiseless tread.

"Father, for I may call you so now, is it true that *he* is dead?" she asked, in a low tone, and in the Hebrew tongue.

Moses Gripstein strode to the bed and took her hand, while he said in a voice that quivered:

"Yes, he is dead, and it is better so."

He was dignified now, almost grand, for he spoke in his own language, and his love for his child caused him to forget himself and his love for gold.

"There is no mistake, father?"

"None."

"It is better so," she murmured.

"Yes, far better; but tell me of this, my child."

"What does it mean?"

"I betrayed my secret to you?"

"Yes."

"You know that I loved him?"

"Yes."

"It is better to love his memory being dead, than himself living."

"You know who he was?"

"Alas, yes."

"What did you deem him?"

"When I first saw him, your friend."

"Ah! and then?"

"I could not help it that my heart went out to him, for he won me by a look, a word, fascinated me in fact."

"I strove against it, and yet I watched for his coming."

"I knew at last that he was a smuggler, and I strove to fight against my love for him; but I loved the man in spite of his crimes."

"He was more."

"Tell me all that he was, father?"

"You have heard of Kent the Buccaneer?"

"Who has not?"

"He was Kent the Buccaneer."

"My God! so vile as that?"

"Yes, my child."

"But Kent the Buccaneer has been long dead."

"So it was believed."

"You tell me the truth, father?"

"I do."

"Then what was your connection with Kent the Buccaneer?"

Moses Gripstein winced under the question thus put, and it was some moments before he replied, and not until the query came again:

"What had you, father, an honorable man, in common with a buccaneer?"

"It is a long story, my child, but I will tell you that I owed him my life, and when he came to me in distress, I could not betray him, and in fact befriended him."

"He pledged me he would lead an honorable life if he had a vessel which he could sail as a trader."

"I bought him one, and he has paid me my share of the profits regularly; but only lately did I learn that he was not an honest trader, but a smuggler: in fact none other than Black Brandt."

"Now I learn of his death, and I am satisfied to lose my vessel, as it ends his career," and Moses Gripstein coughed violently to clear his throat of the clever lie he had uttered.

"I am glad to understand the situation, my father, but let me tell you that I loved the man, my beau ideal, not the smuggler, the outlaw, the buccaneer."

"Did he ever breathe one word of love to you, my child?" anxiously asked the Jew.

"No, father, never."

"And you only met him here?"

"No, twice I met him when out riding, and he joined me; but he was ever the courteous gentleman."

"But it is over now, wholly ended, and I shall remember my love for him as a dream only."

"I shall hate the man as an outlaw, but love my beau ideal as a man, father."

"It is over now, and you need feel no anxiety about me."

Moses Gripstein seemed relieved greatly, and after some further conversation with his daughter went to his office.

He was without doubt deeply moved, and yet glad that matters were no worse.

He regretted the loss of his vessel, and also of Black Brandt simply because they were bringing in a very rich revenue to him.

But with the danger of his beautiful daughter loving the outlaw living, he preferred to have him dead, and thus console himself for the loss of his money.

"Next time I will have no handsome man about, for these women are such curiosity bubbles."

"Well, well, I don't understand a woman, if she is my daughter, any more than I do the vitcher women—ah! I will go me and see the vitcher women and may be she can tell me if Black Brandt is kilt dead, or only make believe."

"He was so often dead and come up to live some more, I don't know now if he is dead man or live man."

"But the vitcher women was know of course, so I will go and ask her all about it."

Soon after Moses Gripstein took a drive alone,

and leaving his two-wheeled chaise at the Cassiday Cottage, he looked about to see that no one was watching his movements, and then wended his way to the cabin of Wo-ton-ka the Woman of Mystery.

As he approached he saw a black flag run up on the flagstaff to half-mast, and as the breeze floated it he beheld a black field, in the center of which was a skeleton form.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN DOUBT.

WO-TON-KA met the money-lender upon the piazza.

She had evidently seen his approach, and as he drew near the piazza the parrot signaled his coming by calling out:

"Ho, Moses! Moses!"

Moses Gripstein despised that parrot as much as he feared the dog and the cats.

The latter eyed him askance while the dog growled viciously as he lay upon a mat but did not move or attempt to bite him.

A word from Wo-ton-ka quieted him and she said:

"Well, Moses Gripstein, what is it this time that you want of the Woman of Mystery?"

"Vell, vitcher women, I was want to ask you somedings?"

"There is your answer floating at half-mast there," and she pointed upward.

"You means t'e flags?"

"Yes."

"It was a plack flag mit a skeletons all white in it."

"Well?"

"That don't was tell me nodings I wants to know."

"You wish to know if Black Brandt is dead or alive?"

"How was you know dot?"

"Is it not so?"

"Vell it was."

"And I say there is your answer."

"It says he was dead?"

"Don't you read it so?"

"It was apout so; but do you believe it was done?"

"I have not read my signs yet, but there are reasons for believing that Black Brandt the Buccaneer went to his doom in a storm, with an enemy in chase of him."

"Did you read the papers?"

"Why should I read man's work, when I can read the stars, the signs of the heavens, the wind and the waves."

"Dot was so," said the Jew, as though fully convinced by such logic.

But after a silence the woman said:

"At times all signs fail, and even I am at fault."

"When another moon comes I will tell you whether Black Brandt is alive or dead."

"When t'e moon comes some more?"

"Yes."

"Vell, I want to know."

"At present the signs point to Black Brandt's death, and if he is not, then he has been in deadliest peril."

"Further than that I cannot now read."

"Vell, I comes again when ve have some more moons."

"Do so; but now tell me if I did not keep my promise to you?"

"V'at was dot?"

"You are short memoried, Jew."

"Vell, vell, tell me v'ot it was I wants to know?"

"Did not your man escape from prison?"

"Oh yes, he got away, but t'e devil's help him out, so you was owe me some monish v'ot I pays you, don't you see."

"Moses Gripstein, you are a fool."

"Vas dot so?"

"It is."

"How was dat, for I don't t'ink I was so mooth of a fools as I looks."

"You don't; well, why do I owe you money when you are in my debt?"

"V'at I owes you?" anxiously asked Moses.

"For the information I just gave you about Black Brandt, but you can pay when I tell you all I wil know when I read other signs."

"Vill it be expensive reading mit t'e signs?"

"I shall charge you one hundred dollars."

"But I pays you for get t'e mans out of brison, and you don't do it."

"I did do it."

"Vas you t'e devil?" asked Moses in an awed manner.

"No, but Satan is subject to my will, and I had him do the work."

"Vell, I want to know."

"Do you wish to see Satan?"

"V'at was you say, vitcher women?" and the Jew rose quickly from his seat.

"Do you wish me to show my power by calling up Satan as proof of what I can do?"

"I only wants to get away from here."

"Then you feel now that I earned the money you paid me?"

"Dot was so, and I was glad."

"I was tell you good-evenings," and Moses moved off with an alacrity that caused the par-

rot to laugh heartily, while Wo-ton-ka called out:

"When the next full moon comes, I will tell you all you would know."

But the Jew only hastened on, terribly afraid that he might be called upon to face his Satanic highness, or rather lowness, in the broad glare of day.

The woman watched him until he reached his chaise, and unhitching his horse, drove away.

"Then she dropped into a chair and mused aloud:

"He certainly has had no more news than I, and which the paper gave."

"So it was that he came to me; but I must have news soon, for if I do not, I will go and find out the truth."

"I cannot live in this suspense."

"Yet I cannot, will not believe that he is dead."

"He is not a man to die thus—run ashore by a craft not his equal in size and strength."

"He pledged me that he would not take life except to save life, but yet he would not be cornered and not strike back."

"No, no; Black Brandt is not dead."

"It is only a false report about him as scores of others of his death have proven to be."

"If I hear no news soon, I will seek this home of Commodore Hartwell, see this Claude Searle face to face and learn from his lips the whole story."

"Who can he be, I wonder?

"A daring fellow, whoever he is, to run Black Brandt to his destruction—if he is dead."

"Claude Searle! Can it be that it is Claude Cassiday under another name?

"It is just such an act as Cassiday would be guilty of for its boldness, and he has dropped wholly out of sight, he and his good mother and sister."

"Yes, I must see this Claude Searle and know from his lips the story, and then I can judge for myself if Black Brandt be dead or alive."

"If he is Claude Cassiday, and he has driven Black Brandt to his doom, I fear I will let my regard for him turn to hate and revenge, for the man who brings death to Kent Curtis can never have Wo-ton-ka for a friend," and the handsome face of the woman darkened with passion as she uttered the words.

A moment after she resumed her musings with the question:

"Will that beautiful Jewess come to me again, I wonder, to know if Black Brandt be dead?"

"Ah, me! what a strange world is this I live in, and is not knowledge a crime to many?"

"Hearts that love are curses to most beings, and I would that I never had one, never loved."

"Better had it been for me had I never met one to touch my heart, never sought knowledge to gain power, but had been content with what Destiny had in store for me as what I was."

"What fools these mortals be, and how I gloat in my power to make them greater fools, to force them to fear me," and the woman laughed bitterly as though there were pain in the knowledge of her power as well as pleasure.

CHAPTER XXX.

ZAPHIEL.

"I HAVE loved and lived unworthily."

"Now my love is buried and I can live in the present."

So mused Zaphiel as she rode out one afternoon some weeks

"But I guess it is all right."

"I hope and believe so, brother."

"Now to your strange infatuation for this man?"

"Yes, brother, for it was an infatuation."

"You loved the man, not the outlaw, and I can forgive you for it, as we cannot control our hearts."

"You know this, Emanuel?" eagerly asked Zaphiel.

"Yes, but too truly, for I love one whom I can never hope to win."

"Had I met her under different circumstances, that is, had she never known me as the nephew of Moses Gripstein, the Jew money-lender, I would have sought to win her heart; but as it is I can never hope to do so."

"You refer to Miss Hartwell?"

"I do."

"She is so beautiful, so lovable, I do not wonder that you love her."

"I cannot help it, fight against it as I will, and hence I can feel for you, even though your love was bestowed unworthily, Zaphiel."

"But let me tell you a strange circumstance."

"Yes, brother."

"When that jail-bird escaped, the man who sought to kidnap her, I felt that she was in danger, and so I determined to warn her."

"I dared not do it openly, so wrote her an anonymous letter, and sent it to her."

"To my amazement I received an answer, thanking me most kindly for my interest in her welfare, and saying that she would be on the watch for danger."

"Now how did she know who wrote that letter?"

"I do not understand it, unless she recognized your handwriting, which is a very remarkable style, you know."

"Yes, but where did she ever see it?"

"I cannot tell you, brother, I am sure."

"Perhaps, after all, you put your name to the note."

"No, I could hardly have been so silly."

"You are in love, and people in such a condition are hardly accountable, brother."

"Very true; but here is her letter."

Zaphiel took the letter and read it.

"It is a very kind letter, brother."

"Yes, but it mystifies me how she knew that I wrote that note."

"Now, sister, we both have our secret sorrow, our lost loves, so let us bury them and live for future good and usefulness."

"You are not looking well, so go for a gallop on horseback."

"Will you accompany me, brother?"

"Not this afternoon, as I have an engagement," and Zaphiel saw her brother's face flush.

But she took his advice, mounted her horse, and rode away toward the country alone.

As she rode along she mused half-aloud, her thoughts being busy, and found expression in the words that open this chapter.

Unconsciously she had taken a different path than the one she was wont to take and had ridden further.

It did not occur to her that she had long since ceased to meet people also out for a ride, and she was brought to a sudden consciousness of her situation by a sudden peal of thunder.

It fairly startled her, and she at once wheeled her horse, when she beheld a horseman close behind her.

He raised his hat politely and said:

"We are going to have a storm, miss; may I offer the shelter of my vessel, which lies yonder, until it blows over?"

The man's face was courteous, and he looked like an honest coaster captain.

The storm was sweeping up with violence, and Zaphiel had to confess to a fear of lightning.

She now saw, moored against the banks near, a sloop, which appeared to have come up into the inlet to get vegetables from the farmers, though no farm-house was in sight.

"You will get very wet, miss, and I think the storm will soon blow over, when you can gallop back to town in an hour's time."

"I thank you, sir, I will accept shelter on your vessel," said Zaphiel, as a terrific peal of thunder followed the words of the man, and she saw several others upon the sloop making the craft ready for the sudden blow that had come up.

The man led the way to the bank, aided Zaphiel to dismount, and called to one of his crew to unsaddle her horse and hitch him near.

As she entered the little cabin, just as large raindrops began to fall, there came a cry from the man who held her horse and she beheld her animal dashing away at full speed, frightened by a thunder-clap.

"Oh! what shall I do?" cried poor Zaphiel.

"Don't mind it, miss, for I have my cargo all in, and can run down to the town and land you."

"Just enter the cabin, for the storm is upon us."

Zaphiel obeyed, condemning herself bitterly for having lost herself in her deep meditations, so as to come so far and not notice the gathering of the storm.

"I am safe here at least, and can reach home by nightfall at furthest," she said, as she sat down in the dingy little cabin of the sloop.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SEEKING INFORMATION.

WHEN the handsome young Hebrew, Emanuel Gripstein, held the conversation with his sister about his unrequited love affair, and her unfortunate regard, or fascination, for the smuggler chief, he had it in his mind to hold an interview with Wo-ton-ka the Woman of Mystery, and see what she could tell him of his future.

The same afternoon therefore that Zaphiel went on her ride alone, he got an afternoon off and went to see the Witch of the Cliff.

He went there by boat, for he was fond of rowing, and landed on the sands near her cabin.

He noticed as he landed that there was a black flag flying from the flagstaff, with silver stars and a crescent moon in it, while in the center was embroidered a human eye in gold.

He ascended the steep path to the cliff top, and beheld the Woman of Mystery seated in her death-chair, her foot upon the skull footstool, the dog lying by her side and the birds upon their usual perches, while the cats were asleep near by.

The woman held in her hand a chart of the heavens by night, and seemed to be studying it attentively while she looked up only when the dog growled at the approach of a stranger, and the parrot called out:

"I want to know! I want to know!"

The young Hebrew raised his hat with mock politeness and asked:

"Is this Madam Wo-ton-ka the Woman of Mystery?"

"Yes. Emanuel Gripstein, be seated."

"You know me, and yet we never met before?" said Emanuel in surprise, as he took the seat to which she motioned him.

He had seen the woman occasionally, but never supposed that she knew who he was.

"Why would I boast of my power if it did not reveal to me who my visitor is?" she asked.

"Your power is indeed wonderful, madam, I am at last forced to admit."

"I have scoffed at it again and again, but at last—"

"Have come to me for the reading of your destiny?"

"You know this?"

"Have I not proven it by my words?"

"It is true, for I am here to know that which perhaps your power can read for me?"

"You love one whose love you would win?"

"True."

"Yet you doubt your power?"

"Again true."

"You are wise."

"Then you mean there is no hope for me."

"You are handsome, have a brave heart and generous nature."

"You are a gentleman, refined and sought by many of your own race who love you."

"But your heart has gone out of the fold of your people, and has clung to one who bears the cross of the Christian, placed upon her forehead in infant baptism, while in your veins flows the blood of those who persecuted and put to death the one whom she worships."

"Is it not so?"

"In part, yes."

"You say in part?"

"I do."

"Ah! I see your meaning, for you are but half a Jew."

"What!" and the young Hebrew started while his face paled.

"I mean what I say."

"But half a Jew?"

"Do you not know it?"

"Your power is wonderful."

"Your words admit that you know you are the son of Moses Gripstein, not his nephew, as the world believes."

"How know you that?"

"My power to read the past, to tear down the curtain that shuts human sight out from the future, tells me that your mother was no Jewess."

"By Heaven! but you speak the truth."

The woman smiled and continued:

"You have the imprint of the Christian in your face rather than the stamp of the Hebrew."

"You love your people, and you love a Christian girl."

"It was your delight to have served her, and you loved her from that moment."

"You would win her if you could, yet you dare not face repulse."

"You are brave, would face death fearlessly, but you have not the courage to face a refusal of your love from the lips of Celeste Hartwell."

"Ah! you know whom I love?"

"Why not?"

"True, I forgot your wondrous power, madam."

"Yet you come to me to know your destiny."

"And it is never to win her love?"

"She has no love to give."

"Ah! your words are ambiguous."

"They are true."

"You mean that she cannot be won?"

"I mean that she can be won."

"I do not understand you."

"By the right man!"

"Ah! then I am not that man?"

"No."

"She loves, then?"

"Yes."

"Then my love for her is hopeless?"

"Utterly."

The young man bowed his head in silence while he said:

"I submit to my fate."

"You would ask no more?"

"Nothing."

"You are a manly fellow."

"Thank you."

"Were you not, you would ask who your successful rival is."

"Ah! you know?"

"I do."

"It is none of my affair, but I envy him above all men."

"I will tell you that he does not know of her love for him."

"Can this be true?"

"She loves in secret as you do."

"She loves one whose heart, for all she knows, may be another's."

"Heaven help her if it is."

"She hopes, as you do."

"No, I do not hope now, for I accept the alternative."

"Then you would know no more?"

"Nothing."

"Did you note the flag floating above my roof?"

"Yes."

"Did you observe what it was?"

"The heavens in darkness."

"Yes, but what else?"

"A crescent moon."

"What else?"

"Yes, a human eye."

"True, and it is looking into your future, your life, and it sees for you happiness and love one of these days, for the first pang of grief will end in a memory only, around which a halo will rest, a holy calm, and another love will come to you to shut out the old one, and joy will be yours."

"It looks not so to me now, but I will believe you and hope."

"Now you see only through the lens of sorrow, but Time heals wounds of the heart as well as of the body, and it will be as I tell you, so be a man and give up that which is beyond your reach."

"I will, my good friend, for such you were to me."

"Now accept this purse for the trouble I have given you."

"No, Emanuel Gripstein, I accept no gold from your hand, which has ever been open to the poor and destitute."

"You are liberal, gentle and kind, and so continue, using your gold for the joy it brings to others who have it not."

"I know your life, Emanuel Gripstein, and you have not been warped from the manliness of your nature by greed of gold."

"If you need me, come again—farewell."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SEARCH.

EMANUEL GRIPSTEIN turned away from the Woman of Mystery

riding toward an inlet from the bay, and her horse had dashed back riderless half an hour after.

Emanuel at once went with the two men to the farmer's house, got all the information he could from him and then rode on to the inlet.

There was only a house a quarter of a mile back, and to this he went.

The farmer's family were about to retire when his hail startled them.

In response to his inquiries he learned that a sloop had been lying in the inlet for some days, and the skipper had been around among the farms pricing vegetables and grain, and had bargained for a cargo.

The farmer was surprised to learn no sloop had been seen there in the inlet by Emanuel, and said that a young lady had passed on horseback, when he was on his porch, and soon after the skipper had ridden up, having hired his horse in the morning to ride into town.

He had called to him that as a storm was coming up he would ride on to his vessel and send the animal back after the rain, but he had called to him to turn the beast loose and he would come home.

Soon after, the horse dashed up to the gate in the midst of the rain, but he had not seen the animal ridden by the young lady go by.

But he admitted that he might have taken a different road from the inlet, and at once said he would ride to the inlet with Emanuel and show just where the sloop had been moored, as in the darkness, being strangers, the searchers might have missed seeing it.

This he did, and as they came to the water's edge, the farmer called out:

"She's gone!"

"The sloop?"

"Yes, neighbor, she's gone, and it do look queer, for she had only half a cargo, and hadn't paid for that, while only this morning the captain told me he wouldn't get away for a week or more."

"I'm clean upset about it," and the old man was bemoaning his loss of vegetables, when Emanuel said sternly:

"From here the craft would have to go by the town, would it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"She would have to go down the bay to sea?"

"Yes, stranger."

"If she left when your horse came home, then she has been gone some five hours."

"I guess about that."

"The wind is fresh, yet she could hardly have gotten out to sea yet."

"Hardly, neighbor."

"Describe the craft exactly for me, please."

"She were a heavy craft o' some six tons, I guess, with a big mainsail-boom and tall top-mast, for I didn't see her canvas up."

"She had a long bowsprit, was a rusty lookin', and, if I remembers aright, she had a green-painted stern, with a flying fish painted on each side of her bows, though the name 'peared to me had worn off, or been painted out, yet I did see Portland on her, and the skipper said as how he was out o' the Penobscot."

"I thank you, sir."

"I am sure that my poor sister has been kidnapped, and my chance to rescue her is to catch that craft."

"Accept this for your trouble," and thrusting a gold piece into the hands of the farmer, Emanuel, dashed away at full speed for the town, followed by his two comrades, one of whom the farmer kept up with long enough to give him back the money with the remark:

"Tell the young city gent I be much oblieged for his kindness, but Josiah Blodgett don't take pay fer doin' a favor to a neighbor, and if he catches that skipper I'll come in ter help him string him up if he'll notify me of it."

Sending the watchman by horse to tell his father the situation and his belief, Emanuel rode rapidly through the streets to the wharves, followed by the groom.

His first duty was to go aboard a packet-schooner belonging to his father, and which was then in port, and order her to get ready for sea at once, after which he rowed off to the armed cutter and reported the disappearance of his sister and he had reason to believe she had been kidnapped by the sloop, which he described.

The captain of the cutter at once said he would get under way and note every craft in the harbor, and then put to sea if the vessel described was not found, and thanking the gallant young commander, Emanuel returned ashore, wrote a hasty note to his father, gave it to the groom, whom he sent home with his horse, and then went on board the packet-schooner Zaphiel, named after his sister.

"You have eight men in crew, Captain Deering, I believe?" he said to the captain.

"Yes, Master Emanuel."

"Then you and I will make ten, and you have small-arms on board?"

"Yes, plenty of them."

"Good! Now get under way and stand out to sea under all sail, for the cutter is searching the harbor, and when dawn comes we can get a view up and down the coast to see if the kidnaper is in sight."

Captain Deering was all ready for sailing and eager to get away, so he gave the order to cast off and the pretty schooner went flying down the bay one mass of canvas, for her skipper was in earnest in the search for the beautiful girl for whom his little vessel had been named.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN THE WAKE OF THE SLOOP.

THE commander of the Cutter Patrol was a young naval officer who had won his position by gallant deeds.

He had been born in wealth, his parents being one of the old aristocratic families of Boston, but he had preferred to work out his own salvation as best suited is nature, and so he had written a pleasant note to his parents and disappeared from home one night, going as cabin boy on a fine ship bound to China.

It was years before he again put foot in Boston, and one morning he reappeared, landing from an American vessel-of-war, on board of which he held the berth of midshipman, having worked his way up from a forecastle boy.

He had left home at eleven years of age and returned at eighteen with a pocket full of money, several boxes of curiosities gathered in foreign lands and holding a middys' rank.

His good father had died two years before, leaving him his blessing and a fortune, and his widowed mother welcomed him back with a glad heart, for he had written home each Christmas while away and always sent a present of some kind to his parents.

His last letter had said that he would come home when he had put on an officer's uniform, and he kept his word.

After several years more of cruising, and a couple of promotions for gallant services rendered, Earl Underwood was made a lieutenant and placed in command of the armed schooner known as a coast guard.

He had found his vessel considerable of a tub, certainly a very lubberly craft, so he had built a trim little cutter after a model of his own drawing, equipped her thoroughly, armed her, and presented it to the Government, a gift which was promptly accepted by the young republic, not over rich in its finances.

So as acting captain, Earl Underwood took command of the coast guard cutter Patrol, and a splendid craft she proved to be, with her five guns, forty men in crew and her firm dashing young midshipmen officers.

Hardly five minutes passed after Emanuel Gripstein's visit to the cutter before her anchor was up, sail set, and she was cruising about the harbor in search of the sloop described as the one which it was supposed had run off with Zaphiel.

Just as dawn came the Patrol concluded her search of the harbor, and having sent a midshipman and six men in a boat up the inlet to see if the sloop could be found there, Captain Underwood ran up to meet it on its return.

The young officer reported nothing to be seen up the river of such a craft as the sloop, and then the Patrol went seaward under full sail.

As he ran out into deep water a coaster was hailed coming along the coast, and reported seeing a sloop such as was described, under all the canvas she could carry, hugging the shore, and bound eastward.

Soon after the coaster's skipper had sighted a fine packet-schooner, crowded with sail, going upon the same course as the sloop, only a couple of leagues further out to sea.

"Do you think the sloop was visible from the schooner's decks?" asked Captain Underwood.

"Hardly, sir, though she sailed as though she was trying to head her off, according to my reckoning, and I remarked to my mate that it looked as though the packet was in chase of something."

"Ay, ay; thank you, sir," and the Patrol swept on under every stitch of canvas she could carry, for the wind was blowing half a gale.

The next morning the schooner Zaphiel was sighted coming out of Portland Harbor, and the Patrol ran down to her.

Emanuel Gripstein was not on board, and Captain Deering reported that the sloop had run into Casco Bay the night before and he had found her there.

She was chartered, her owner said, by strangers, for a run to Boston, and had returned during the night and all on board had gone ashore.

"He did not know who they were who had chartered the sloop, but they had paid well for her, and had landed before the one in charge came to him to tell him his vessel was anchored off the wharf."

"What had become of those on board he did not know, but Mr. Emanuel Gripstein had discovered from a night watch that four men had landed from the sloop and they bore a litter on which they said was a comrade who had been injured and they had gone to a hotel he had directed them to."

"But inquiry had shown that they had not gone to the hotel, and what had become of them could not be ascertained; but Mr. Grip-

stein had remained behind to make a thorough search, as he was convinced that the person on the litter was his sister, and not a comrade of the man, and she was doubtless unconscious from some drug given her to prevent outcry."

Such in substance was the story of Captain Deering, who was returning with the Zaphiel to go on her regular voyage, leaving Emanuel Gripstein in Portland to continue the search from there after the kidnapped maiden.

"I will go on into port and lend him all the aid in my power, and so report upon your return to Boston, Captain Deering," said Earl Underwood and the Patrol at once held on her way into Portland Harbor, while the captain of the Zaphiel put away for Boston.

Anchoring off the town Earl Underwood landed a dozen of his men to look Emanuel Gripstein up with the quickest dispatch.

As for himself he sought the taverns and at last found that Emanuel Gripstein had put up at Good Cheer Inn, but was away at the time searching for a clew to the men who had landed from the little sloop.

Leaving a note for him to come on board the Patrol and see him, the young captain went on a tour of inspection himself and after several hours returned to his vessel.

He found there his men, who made their various reports of what they had done, and he jotted all down for future use.

Soon after a boat was reported coming off from the shore, and in it was Emanuel Gripstein.

He sprung on deck with nimble step and grasped the hand of the young commander, who asked eagerly:

"Have you found her?"

"Not a trace of her," was the disheartened response.

"Come into the cabin then and see if I can give you hope," and Earl Underwood led the way into his very comfortable quarters.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BEYOND DOUBT.

"THEN you have some news, Captain Underwood?" hopefully asked Emanuel Gripstein as he dropped into a seat and turned his gaze upon the handsome young commander of the Patrol.

The cabin was as comfortable as a lady's *boudoir*, and as attractive too.

It was furnished with a luxury that was most inviting, and about it were souvenirs of travel the world over, picked up in the ports which Earl Underwood had visited.

There were sketches, and paintings, marine and landscapes, for the sailor was as skillful an artist as a commander, and several musical instruments were scattered about, looking as though often used for the pleasure of his friends and his own amusement.

"I will tell you all I know, Gripstein," said Earl Underwood cheerily.

"I found no sloop of the description you gave me in Boston, so I came to sea and meeting a coaster discovered that I was on the right track."

"I sighted the Zaphiel and heard what you had discovered, so came in here to offer my services, and set my men to look you up."

"You are more than kind, Captain Underhill, and I appreciate all that you have done for a stranger."

"I am not such a stranger as you think, Gripstein; but to my story.

"Not finding you at the Good Cheer, I left a note for you and went on a voyage of discovery myself."

"What I found out was that your sister certainly was kidnapped and brought off by the sloop."

"You are sure of this?"

"Perfectly, for I went on board the sloop to have a look at her, and here is tell-tale evidence — her whip, and handkerchief, for she was on horseback you said."

"Yes, they are hers! poor Zaphiel," cried Emanuel with feeling as he took the gold-mounted riding-whip bearing the name:

"ZAPHIEL."

The handkerchief was of finest cambric, and in the center was embroidered the letter "Z."

"These I found in the cabin of the sloop, and I then questioned the man who chartered the vessel to the men, and afterward the night-watch who saw them land."

"But I could find out no more, though two of my men did."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, they discovered that a fishing-smack had been lying at anchor far up the harbor since the night the sloop sailed, and that it put to sea the very night the sloop returned."

"They got their news from a fisherman who lives on the shore, and he reported five men coming in on the smack and but one remaining on board for three weeks."

"He also said that four men, bearing a burden of some kind, passed his house after midnight and asked to take his boat, which was locked, to go off to the fishing-smack, and he let them have the key."

"They anchored the boat, not bringing it ashore and the smack was gone in the morning.

"The one man who remained on board had come to his hut for fresh water for his cask, and had told him that his mates had gone to Boston on a packet, and he was awaiting their return.

"So this means that they covered up their tracks by coming here in their own craft, chartering the sloop, and returning to this port had gone on board the smack and set sail for some place down the coast.

"Now I have sent an officer in the yawl down the harbor to discover if any one saw the smack go to sea, or if she went inshore through Casco Bay.

"If she did go to sea, then I shall take the coast in search of her, and if she went through Casco I shall throw a crew on board the sloop, which I have already chartered, and send her through the islands to meet me at Sequin Island."

"How much you are doing for me, Captain Underhill, and my poor sister."

"I am doing that which is only my duty, my dear sir, and I am determined to find your sister if it can be done.

"Now return to the inn, write a letter to your father, to go by mail coach, telling him you are on the track of her kidnappers, for it will relieve his mind at least to know you are not on the wrong tack, and then come off to the Patrol as my guest.

"Post this letter for me also, if you please, and lose no time in coming back again, as I shall have the sloop ready and the anchor a-trip to sail the moment your foot touches the deck.

"The yawl I will run across down the harbor, and then we will know just what to do, and my word for it that we will hunt these kidnappers down."

Emanuel's heart was too full to express his gratitude and appreciation, and he turned away ashore and within half an hour was again on board the Patrol.

He was shown to a state-room off the cabin, and bade to make himself perfectly at home.

Then the anchor was gotten up, the Patrol wore round and went down the harbor.

On the way the sloop was passed with a couple of officers and ten men on board.

She was hailed by Captain Underwood and told to follow in the wake of the schooner, which she did, keeping up in a manner that showed she was a good sailor.

As Casco Bay opened upon the port bow, and the ocean was visible to starboard, the yawl was seen coming along under sail.

The schooner and the sloop lay to and the yawl soon ran alongside of the Patrol.

"Well, Mr. Burnett, what discovery did you make?" called out Captain Underwood to the officer in charge of the yawl.

"The smack referred to, sir, as described by the fisherman, passed down the bay at an early hour this morning.

"There were five men visible on board, and she was carrying full sail, while a female dressed in black was visible on her decks.

"I had my information from some fishermen over on the island yonder, sir."

"Good! then we are on the right track, Mr. Gripstein," and turning to the officer in command of the sloop, and who seemed to be awaiting orders, he continued:

"You heard what Burnett said, Manning, so hold on down the bay running with all speed.

"I will hug the shore outside and await you off Sequin Island or in the Kennebec."

The two vessels then separated, the yawl was swung up to the stern davits and the Patrol headed out to sea, while the sloop went flying away into the waters of Casco Bay.

"Now, Mr. Gripstein, we must catch that fellow and punish him as he deserves, and I pledge you he shall swing for his work if I get hold of him," said Captain Underwood, and his cheery manner gave Emanuel hope that his sister would soon be rescued.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN UNFORGOTTEN ACT.

It was after supper on the Patrol, and Captain Underwood and Emanuel Gripstein were seated in the cabin talking together.

The schooner was gliding swiftly along, at a six-knot pace, and the moonlight revealed the sea to starboard for leagues, and the dark line that marked the island dotted coast of Maine to port, hardly over a couple of miles away.

"I do not know how to prove my appreciation of your great kindness to me, Captain Underwood, for you have indeed done more than could have been expected of my dearest friend.

"My sister, I know, must suffer greatly at her unfortunate and cruel captivity, and it is my hope to relieve her mind as soon as possible, that I wish to capture the kidnappers at once, and I would spend any amount to do so, as money is not to be considered either by my uncle or myself.

"Of course she was taken to be held for ransom alone, but before it could be negotiated much time would elapse, and meanwhile she

would suffer greatly, so I do hope we may overhaul the smack.

"Should we not, then we can only wait for the kidnappers to declare themselves, and pay the ransom they demand, be it ever so much.

"But you, sir, are doing all that mortal can do to rescue her," and Emanuel Gripstein spoke most earnestly.

After a short silence Captain Underwood replied:

"Mr. Gripstein, you said this afternoon I was aiding those who had no claim upon me.

"Let me tell you that you are mistaken."

"Why, what claim can myself or sister have upon you, sir?"

"A great one."

"That of humanity alone."

"No."

"I can see no other claim."

"Let me refresh your memory by a little story, if you will listen to it."

"With pleasure, sir."

"Some years ago a lad visited the office of Moses Gripstein.

"He was a sailor boy, and he had with him a very costly and beautiful locket, studded with gems, which he wished to pawn for a stated time for a given sum.

"The youth saw Moses Gripstein, your uncle, and asked for the sum of two thousand dollars upon it.

"He said he would advance it for a certain interest, on thirty days' time only.

"The youth begged for a longer time, but it was not granted, and so he was compelled to accept the terms of Moses Gripstein, who said he would buy the locket outright, but not lend money on it longer than for the thirty days.

"The lad took the money and left the office, and within thirty days he was back to say that it was impossible to redeem the locket, and begged for time to be given him in which to do so.

"But Mr. Gripstein was inexorable in his refusal and showed the lad that his time was really up then, as nothing had been said of three days' grace being allowed.

"Then the youth told the money-lender his story, of how he had been left a fortune, but could not touch a dollar of it until he was of age.

"That in a foreign land his life had been saved by a young naval officer, and that man, then in Boston, had come to him and told him how, under the influence of drink, he had gambled away money intrusted to his care, and it must be given back the next day or he would be disgraced and the shock would kill his mother, who was an invalid, and bring dishonor upon his name.

"The youth had decided to save him and appealed to his mother for funds, but she refused to advance money to him as she suspected he had been gambling, and as he was not of age the debt could not be collected.

"He appealed to his guardian and the executors of the estate, but they would do nothing, as he would not tell what it was for, and would not compromise his friend by doing so.

"In his despair, for he had pledged the savior of his life to help him, he took from his treasures a gemmed locket containing a miniature of his mother and father when they were young, and given to him.

"It was a costly trinket valued at three thousand dollars, while its value as his mother's and father's miniature likeness could not be calculated.

"This he raised the money on, as I have said, and banded it to his friend, who was to pay him back within the given time, he said, as he had prize money soon to be paid to him.

"That night he staked that money at the gambling-table, won largely, paid the debt he owed, and instead of returning the loan to the youth, lost it all at cards before the week had passed.

"He saved his honor, but left the youth in despair.

"He received his prize money, something over the amount the youth had loaned him, and sailed on a foreign cruise without giving a dollar back.

"So it was the youth in despair went to your uncle, to beg him to wait until he could get the money, for he meant to confess the truth to his mother, who was then away from Boston for a few days, but who would, he knew, redeem the locket at any cost.

"When Mr. Gripstein told him the time was up he turned away in greater despair than ever he had known before.

"He had gone but half a square when you overtook him and told him to have no fear, that the locket would be returned, for you had been in the office and heard all.

"You asked the youth his name and address, and he gave you an assumed name and an address that was not the correct one.

"Several days after he received a letter asking him to come to the office Moses Gripstein at a certain hour.

"He did so, and met a young girl, for he went to the house entrance as directed.

"It was your sister Zaphiel, and she handed him the locket, saying that you had heard the story, and determined to help him.

"That you had told her about it, and it had been agreed that you should show her the locket before your uncle and she should ask him to give it to her.

"This he did and would never think of it again, perhaps.

"So she told me to take it from her.

"The youth intended that she should keep it until he could return the money, but she said that he should take it and pay the amount at his will, if it took him years.

"Upon these conditions he took the locket, and year by year he sent some money to you.

"After three years he came of age and got possession of his inheritance and then paid the balance with interest, the latter, however, being returned to him with the information that as Miss Gripstein had advanced no money on the locket, there was no interest due.

"Now, Mr. Gripstein, it was your good heart that saved that locket, and your sister gave it up in the nobleness of her nature, and let me tell you that your deed and hers raised your people in my estimation, and I have never forgotten the favor rendered me, for *I was that sailor lad*.

"I was the one you so nobly befriended, you and your beautiful sister, Zaphiel."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE WHITE SCHOONER.

THE story of Captain Underwood had been listened to by Emanuel Gripstein with the deepest of interest.

He of course recalled the whole circumstance, and said:

"So that handsome sailor-lad was you, Captain Underwood?

"Well, Zaphiel and I have often spoken of you, and she always said that you gave an assumed name, and she was sure that you would pay the value of the locket as you promised.

"You see she read you aright, captain."

"Yes, I would have paid it under any and all circumstances, I assure you; but that did not alter your kindness and hers to me, a stranger."

"I heard your story, and felt that it was true.

"It touched my heart, where uncle was wholly callous, is so in fact to all others except Zaphiel and myself.

"So I told my sister, and we decided to save the locket for you, a decision I came to when I ran after you and got your name.

"Then we acted, and uncle never referred to the locket from that day to this, but the money you paid in I put to his account in the bank, for he does not keep any account of what he is worth since I began to manage for him.

"He counts over each day's receipts religiously, looks over all loans, and as soon as he has done this he drops it entirely, so that I could defraud him of half his fortune if so I wished, and he be none the wiser.

"He is a clever business man, makes wise investments, and his returns are very large from revenues outside of our business which I know nothing of, but all he gives to me to bank for him, even his receipts from the packet-vessels he runs, and all he touches turns to gold.

"Once he was a different man, with ambitions of a nobler kind; but he failed in his plans to become a great leader of men, and was developed into what he now is, an avaricious money-getter.

"I offer this explanation that you may understand when he refused to favor you he never thought of the trinket, on which he had advanced two thousand dollars, after he handed it over to my sister."

"Yes, he is a remarkable man, and I am glad to hear your explanation of the affair, Mr. Gripstein, while I have told you my story to show you that we are not strangers, that I owe you a debt of gratitude I can never repay."

"No indeed, do not speak of it, for I did only my duty, and Zaphiel is always doing good.

"I see much of misery in our business, Captain Underwood, and have tried to take off the sharp edge of bitterness and greed my uncle shows as much as possible."

"I have no doubt of it, Mr. Gripstein; but I was a lad then just come back home from carrying out my future in my own way.

"I found my father dead, and I his heir, and my mother was proud to feel that I had won an epaulette unaided—ha! do you hear that?" and from aloft came the cry of the lookout:

"Sail ho!"

Captain Underwood and Emanuel went on deck and glanced out over the moonlit sea.

"Whereaway, my man?" called out the captain, his glass in hand.

"Ay ay, I see her, and she has all sail up and snowy canvas she sets too—ah! her hull is white also, and if I mistake not, so are her spars."

"She is heading for us, sir," said the officer of the deck.

"So I see, Mr. Burnett, so call the men to quarters quietly and be ready for him, as he may prove a coast pirate or smuggler, for I do not know of such a craft as he appears."

The men went to quarters, and the schooner held on her way.

Having come out from under the shadow of the land, the white schooner, now not over a mile away, came down toward the Patrol at a slapping pace, everything drawing.

As she drew near Captain Underwood said:

"I certainly do not know that craft as a coast-er."

"She is a stranger to me."

"Shall I throw a shot over her, sir, to see how she takes it?" asked officer Burnett.

"No, for she is smaller than we are, and is not running away from us."

"Point closer, helmsman, so as to head her off, and we will know just what she is."

"If she is peaceable all right, and if she means fight we can accommodate her."

Ten minutes more passed and then Captain Underwood hailed:

"Ahoy! ahoy the schooner!"

"What craft is that?"

"The Sea Cloud—Commodore Hartwell's yacht," came the answer, with the added words:

"What schooner is that?"

"The United States coast guard schooner Patrol."

"Which way bound?"

"On a cruise in search of Black Brandt's schooner Evil Spirit."

"Hal! what is that?"

"Come to under my lee," cried Captain Underwood and the Patrol was quickly run up into the wind.

The stranger swept by and obeyed the order, laying to not over two lengths away from the Patrol.

"What is that you say, sir, about Black Brandt?" called out Captain Underwood.

"I reported his vessel as destroyed, sir, some time ago, and believed it to be so, as I saw her drive ashore against the cliffs; but I have since proof that Black Brandt was not lost or his vessel either, unless he has another black schooner, for he passed down the coast last night and I am in search of him, but seeing you, ran down to see what you were."

"You say that your vessel is Commodore Hartwell's yacht?"

"Yes, sir, from his estate of Hermitage Hall on the coast."

"Who commands her?"

"I do, sir, Claude Searle."

"Ay, ay, sir, and you report now that the Black Phantom was not lost?"

"She was not, sir, for she has been seen on the coast several times in the past week."

"And you are in search of her?"

"Yes, sir, for I have a roving commission from Commodore Hartwell."

"I am aware of that, Mr. Searle; but I am in search of a small smack that passed down the coast, or in Casco Bay last night."

"She is of the class known on your coast as chebacco boats, and her crew kidnapped the daughter of a wealthy Bostonian several nights ago."

"Will you tell me, sir, the name of the lady kidnapped?" quickly asked Claude Searle.

"It was the daughter of Mr. Moses Gripstein the money-lender."

"Thank you, sir," and the response seemed in a tone of relief, Captain Underwood thought; but he said:

"I wish you would have a watch for the craft I refer to, for Mr. Emanuel Gripstein, who is now here with me, offers a most liberal reward for the restoration of his sister, which will serve as an incentive to your crew."

"I shall do all in my power, sir, to find the chebacco boat, and secure the lady, who can only have been taken for ransom; but please report that the Evil Spirit is not at the bottom of the sea, as was believed."

"Ay, ay, and if you have more to report, I will be at the mouth of the Kennebec for some days," and thus the vessels parted, the white schooner standing again close inshore.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TAKING THE CHANCES.

THE vessel which had been reported as lost had not been, as the reader has doubtless surmised.

The Sea Cloud had been sighted by the crew of the Evil Spirit almost as soon as those on the white schooner had observed the black one.

Captain Brandt had laid his course for his retreat, and he meant to go there, barring accidents.

He trusted in the speed of his splendid vessel, and held along the coast, feeling that the Sea Cloud would have to round the rock island to come in chase, and that would put her nearly a league astern of him, which in the darkness and storm would leave her far out of sight.

Then he was not sure that those on the white schooner saw his craft.

When the Sea Cloud changed her course, he said to his first officer:

"The sea is too wild for him, and he is running to a lee under the rocky island; but it will not help him as much as he thinks."

Soon after, Black Brandt turned to his officer and said:

"See here, that craft is not after a lee, but is running parallel with us, determined to come out through the reefs upon us."

"That is what he is doing, sir; but do you think he will dare come out into deep water?"

"Yes, for it's a bold commander that controls that craft."

In a short while the officer repeated that the white schooner was setting more sail.

"Yes, he wishes to run out right upon us; but there is no danger, for when he comes through the channel he will have all he can do to stagger under the seas, and they are getting worse, while the wind is increasing."

"We have nothing to fear from him, and the chances are that he will swamp."

"You think he is a cruiser?"

"Oh yes, and I think it is the new coast-guard craft that has its rendezvous at Boston, and which is under the command of young Underwood, who is a very daring officer, I learn, and skillful as well."

"I know of no other craft in these waters that it can be."

"There is the yacht from Hermitage Hall, sir."

"Ah, yes, I had forgotten that she is about ready for sea, and is armed."

"By Neptune's beard it is that craft I am sure, though I never saw her."

"If so, let her come on."

They were now crossing the end of the island, where the pass was out to sea, and the vessels were nearly parallel.

But the smuggler chief had no anxiety as to the measures of the stranger.

"She will catch it soon, and he will founder out here in that small craft," he said.

A few minutes more and the white schooner pointed up for the run out.

She was soon in the wild ocean breakers rushing through the channel, but she came steadily on to the admiration of Black Brandt.

"She is plucky, and I guess I know who her commander is from the way she is handled."

"The craft is the Hermitage Hall yacht I am sure."

When the white schooner gained an offing and again fell off so as to follow in the wake of the black schooner, the latter was well ahead and driving along splendidly.

But the smaller vessel did not weaken, as Black Brandt had believed and hoped, when getting out into the sea and feeling the full force of winds and waves.

"That is a daring commander, sir," said the first officer.

"Yes, it can be but one man and I know him."

"He is but a boy in years."

"It is the Hermitage Hall craft I am sure."

"We are dropping him, sir."

"I am surprised we have not run away from him, for this is a storm craft you know, and we are going at a terrific pace."

"He is setting more sail," said the officer, who kept his glass upon the white schooner, which the almost constant lightning flashes kept well in view all the time.

"Well, he may know his craft, but I would think he would wreck her."

"She is creeping up, sir," soon after came the report, and then came the order from Black Brandt to set more sail.

This caused the Evil Spirit to again drop the white schooner, whose bows were illuminated a moment after by a red flash and then came a solid shot, and a second or two after another, flying far over the black schooner.

"Ha! we must get away from that danger, for though no aim can be taken a chance shot may cripple us, and in this sea that means death."

"He is determined to overhaul the Evil Spirit, or destroy her," and Black Brandt gave the order for more canvas to be set.

Thus the two vessels drove on for a league or more, when the first officer asked:

"Do you intend to run in, sir, to-night?"

"Yes."

"You will venture to give the signal then for the Kennebec to set the beacons, sir?"

"No, for that would give us away."

"I would run in without the beacons."

"My God, Captain Brandt, it would be certain death!" cried the officer in alarm.

"I don't think so, and at any rate, I shall take the chances."

"It is my duty to obey, sir, but I am sure we go to our death."

"There you show yourself a thoroughly drilled man, sir, to go to what you believe certain death, though it would be very unwise in you to hesitate to obey my orders."

There was a significance in the words that caused the officer to feel that the chief would stand no trifling, so he answered:

"I am here, Captain Brandt, to obey your orders, and I have perfect confidence in you, but still I do not believe mortal man can accomplish what you set out to do."

"We shall see," was the grim rejoinder, and soon after Black Brandt added:

"The incessant lightning will aid me to keep the three signal rocks in sight, and if I can lead those on yonder craft to believe we go to pieces, and to our deaths, so much the better."

"Stand by, all!" and the crew took their posts.

Then came the tactics of the black schooner which led those on the Sea Cloud to believe she was crippled, and soon after, having gained the position he sought, Black Brandt squared away directly before the tempest toward the cliffs, while his crew held their breath in dire suspense and dread, for all believed that certain death was before them.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

NICK GOES ON A MISSION.

THE dangerous entrance to the secret basin where the smugglers had their retreat has been referred to before, but it would be well to say here that what appeared from the sea to be a harbor was simply as it was called, a Blind Bay.

Into this rushed the black schooner with the speed of the storm.

She drove before it like mad, drowned out fore and aft, and surging, reeling, staggering as she went through the wild seas.

Until he reached a certain point, where a rock on which a beacon was always set for running in, Black Brandt held on.

By day the rock could be seen, by night the lantern then revealed the turning point, but now the smuggler chief had only the lightning to aid him in the dangerous gantlet he had to run.

Never before in such a storm, not even by day, had the venture of running in been made.

The crew showed their perfect discipline, though each and every man believed they were going to sure destruction, by standing at their posts in silent obedience to the command of their daring resolute outlaw commander.

Black Brandt now stood at the helm with his first officer to aid him, while the second officer was placed amidships to repeat orders.

On dashed the black schooner until suddenly there came a flash of lightning and the rock was revealed.

Then loud and clear rung out the command:

"Down, hard down your helm!"

"Haul in the sheets until they flatten!"

"Steady!"

The schooner had suddenly swung around from before the wind until she caught it abeam, for she had been heading for a certain rock revealed by the lightning, until the other rock came into view after she had reached a particular position.

This had carried her through a narrow channel among sunken rocks, and now, as she caught the gale abeam she lay well over and drove along parallel with the shore for a quarter of a mile, when again, by the lightning's flash another landmark was made visible.

The schooner now had to come up into the wind and go about, a most dangerous undertaking, for should she miss stays she would dash upon the rocks.

But she went about beautifully, wore round until the wind caught her upon the starboard side, and with the gale over her quarter drove on toward the wall of rocks now looming up so near.

For a short while she held this course, and then the cliffs seemed right over her decks and she appeared to be dashing to sure destruction even to her crew.

But a narrow pass opened and into it she shot like a wolf into his den, while from her crew arose wild shrieks of joy which sounded to those on the white schooner like despairing cries.

So wild with delight and admiration of their chief were the smugglers, that Black Brandt in vain tried to quiet them, and being heard at the retreat, the men there came out and yelled themselves hoarse at seeing the black schooner arrive in such a tempest.

A boat was lowered and gotten out ahead, and the schooner was towed up to her resting-place in the stream, while again and again Black Brandt was congratulated by his men upon his splendid nerve and skill.

The chief took it very quietly, for many a time had he extricated himself from a danger equally as great.

He went ashore to his cabin and bade the kidnapper Nick follow him.

"Nick, I have work for you!"

"Yes, chief."

"This storm, and the way we came in will give rise to the report that we are all lost."

"I don't wonder, sir."

"It will be reported, and believed, that our vessel went to pieces against the cliffs."

"I have sent up to the lookout to know what that white schooner is about, for if her captain suspected that I ran in, he is just the man to follow."

"But I am sure he believes us lost—ah! here is Casco now."

"Well, Casco?"

"White schooner go out to sea, chief," reported the Indian.

"Good! it is as I expected; but she'll be back to-morrow to take a close look at the coast to see if there is a running-in place here, and then go away satisfied that every mother's son of us was

lost, and the black schooner was broken up into kindling wood.

"This will help my plans—and I wish you would go again to Boston, if you are not too much in terror of your namesake who got you out of jail."

"No, chief, I am ready to go at once."

"You are to take that little fishing-smack and three men, sail to Portland, leave your craft there and charter a larger one, and more comfortable one."

"Then you run to Boston, seek a hiding-place, watch your chance and kidnap the daughter of Moses Gripstein the money-lender."

"Upon your life harm her not, nor be rude to her, and you are to bring her here."

"In the vessel I charter in Portland, sir?"

"If necessary, yes."

"But if not, return to Portland and transfer her to the smack, which you must make as comfortable as possible for the lady to come here in."

"From the booty on hand I will send all I can to add to the comfort of the lady while a captive on the vessels."

"In Boston you are to seek one whose name I will give you, and arrange with him for the ransom of the Jew's daughter, which I will place at a very large figure, so that you will be well paid for your services."

"Do you understand now what I expect of you?"

"Yes, chief."

"You are to take three men, and they must be trustworthy in every respect."

"I understand, sir."

"You can go to work on the smack in the morning, getting her in trim, and run out to-morrow night."

"Yes, chief."

"I will give you ample funds for your use, and I leave it to you to arrange a plot to capture the lady."

"She often takes rides alone on horseback, and you can in some way inveigle her near your vessel."

"But after your last experience, failure and imprisonment, where Miss Hartwell was concerned, I believe that you have learned a lesson which will serve you well for the work now in hand."

"I certainly have, sir, and shall make no mistake."

"Of course you are to go in disguise, and I will fit you up several but if you find it impossible to capture the lady, then bag the old Jew himself, for he will pay you well indeed for his liberty," and the smuggler chief laughed at his imagination of how Moses Gripstein would take it if he was kidnapped.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CAPTIVE JEWESS.

WHEN the storm broke with violence, and such a downpour of rain, Zaphiel's first thought was one of thankfulness at having found a shelter so secure.

Her horse having run away was a cause of deep regret, as she feared his going home would alarm her father and brother greatly, and she knew their anxiety would know no rest until she returned home.

With the rain pouring down, it would be far better for her to run down to the town in the sloop, where she could secure a carriage, and drive home, while, having her purse with her, she would be able to pay the skipper well for his services to her.

The sloop swung away from her moorings, and went tearing along at a great pace in the storm.

What struck her about the little cabin was its extreme neatness.

There was only one of the four berths in it arranged for an occupant, and this one was neatly spread with the finest linen, and then all about the cabin seemed as though it had held no occupant for some time.

"The skipper must keep his cabin for any chance passengers he may pick up," she said to herself.

She also discovered some articles of feminine attire, and concluded that the skipper must have his wife or daughter down in the town, though there was an elegance about the apparel that surprised her, if worn by one in the humble walks of life.

The rain continued to fall in torrents for an hour or more, and she heard the men on deck attending to their duties, while glancing out through the bull's-eyes in the cabin, she saw them enveloped in storm-suits.

It was a surprise to her that the skipper carried so much sail, as the sloop lay well over on her beam, and seemed to feel the pressure of her canvas considerably.

As she gazed out she saw that the town was in sight, and that they were flying by at a swift pace.

"I will reach home almost as soon as though I had returned upon horseback," she said.

But as the sloop went by the stretch where she had expected to land, she concluded that the

skipper had misunderstood her, so started to call to him, when she found the companionway fastened from without.

This did not surprise her to cause alarm, as she supposed it had been done on account of the storm; but the rain had ceased now, and she knocked upon the companionway.

No response came, and she knocked again, still no reply.

Then she called loudly, but was not answered.

She saw now that the sloop was passing the islands down the bay, and grew alarmed.

Then, unfastening the light in the cabin, she called out loudly to those on deck.

Instantly came the words:

"Close the port, miss, as the sea will dash in, and I will open the companionway."

She obeyed, and for some time she heard a fumbling at the door.

"Why do you not open the door?" she sternly asked.

"Is it not locked from within, miss?"

"No."

"It must be."

"It is not."

"Well, I'll try and open it, for it is jammed."

All this time the sloop was flying along down the bay at a twelve-knot rate.

The wind was astern, and the waters were running high, and Zaphiel knew now that she had been entrapped, else why was she brought leagues away from the town.

At last the noise at the companionway ceased, and she knew that the man had gone away.

She attempted to open the port again, when a swash of water dashed against it.

She tried the other side, and with the same result.

Then she tried the one forward, and again came the dash of waters.

Zaphiel was not to be deceived. She knew that the waters of the bay were not coming up all around the cabin like that, and she caught sight of a man with a bucket.

They were thus preventing her from opening the ports.

Realizing that she was a captive, and not wishing to have the cabin all wet, while shrieking would do no good, she calmly submitted to her fate, and standing by the forward port, gazed out at the scene.

The storm was over, the wind, however, yet blew very fresh, and the sea outside was running heavy.

But she knew that the sloop was running for the open sea.

She had often had a sail on the bay with her brother, and knew that half a mile more would bring them out into the ocean.

At last the sloop began to pitch upon the large waves of the open sea, but the sail was still kept upon her to drive her along, showing that the crew were guarding against pursuit by rapid flight.

At last the companionway was thrown open, and Nick appeared, while he said, politely:

"I beg pardon, lady, but we mean you no harm, for you are only kidnapped to get your father to pay a little money for your ransom."

"Then you came to entrap me?"

"Yes, lady."

"Do you know who I am?"

"Miss Zaphiel Gripstein, the niece of the rich money-lender."

"You have made a mistake, for I am not the niece of the rich money-lender."

Nick started visibly.

Had he made a mistake after all?

No, it could not be, for he had been too careful, so he asked:

"Are you not Miss Gripstein?"

Thus questioned, Zaphiel would not tell a story, so she replied:

"I am."

She had tried to hedge upon being called the niece of Moses Gripstein, hoping she would be taken back if the kidnappers found they had made a mistake.

"Your name is Zaphiel?"

"It is."

"Very well, miss, you are the one we wish, and as I told you, I will see that you are treated with the greatest respect."

"This cabin is wholly for yourself, and was fitted out for you."

"We have a seaman on board who is a good cook, and our food is of the best."

"Where are you taking me?"

"To Portland first, and then to our retreat."

"Your retreat?"

"Yes, miss."

"Who are you?"

"My name is Nick, miss."

"I mean what are you?"

"A smuggler."

"Ah! one of Black Brandt's band?"

"Yes, miss."

"He is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, he and his vessel were driven ashore in a storm."

"It is so believed, miss, but Black Brandt, our chief, is no more dead than I am, while his vessel, the Evil Spirit, is safe and sound as is this sloop," was the startling reply of the kidnapper.

CHAPTER XL.

THE CHARM BROKEN.

THE news heard by Zaphiel from the lips of Nick the Kidnapper, caused her face to turn so white he feared she was going to faint, and said quickly:

"Ah! you need not fear Captain Brandt, miss, for he is a perfect gentleman."

"A smuggler a perfect gentleman?" she sneered.

"Well, you'll find him so, miss."

"Then I am to be taken to him?"

"Yes, miss."

"Where is he?"

"At his retreat."

"Where is that?"

"On the Maine Coast, miss."

"And does he expect my coming?"

"He does, miss."

"Did he send you to kidnap me?"

"Yes, lady."

"He sent you to kidnap Zaphiel the Jewess?"

"He did."

"Saying that her father would pay a liberal ransom for her restoration to him?"

"That is it."

"And this is Captain Brandt?"

"Yes."

"Black Brandt the outlaw?"

"The same, lady."

"And he is the one you call a perfect gentleman, who robs an old man from his fears of harm to one he loves?"

Nick winced under the cutting words, but ventured:

"The captain will make it all right, miss, I assure you."

"He ordered me to fit the sloop's cabin up most comfortably, for I chartered this craft in Portland, having run down from the retreat in a fishing-smack, which the chief also had fitted up for you to go the latter part of the voyage in."

"Now you'll find wraps and clothing here, and all to make you comfortable, for Captain Brandt selected them from the smuggling outfit at the retreat."

"The sloop is well stored, and no one will come near to disturb you, and we are all good seamen aboard, so you have nothing to fear."

"I do not fear the sea, sir."

"Well, you need not fear us, miss."

"It is your chief I fear, for he is different from what I supposed him to be."

"I did think, from all I knew, that he was not one to rob an old man through his fears, and to make war upon a defenseless girl."

"I despise your chief, my man, and it will at least be a pleasure for me to tell him so to his face."

"I'd rather you'd do it, miss, than I, for he is not the man to listen to abuse."

"Tell me how it is that he is not at the bottom of the sea as reported?"

"He did not wreck his vessel as supposed."

"Yet he went upon the rocks?"

"No, miss."

"So the report came."

"Well, you see, the chief knows what he is about, and when chased by the little cruiser, he ran in toward the rocks, went about, dropped all sail and anchors together, and against the dark rocks his black hull and masts could not be seen even by the lightning, and those in the cruiser believed he had gone to destruction."

"When the cruiser put out to sea he followed later and sailed away."

"Do you see?" and Nick told the story he did as he had no idea of having it known that there was an opening in the Blind Bay cliffs through which the black schooner had run to a safe haven, and he knew that upon her return Zaphiel would tell her version of the affair.

"I now understand his ruse, and he is a remarkable man, if such a villain."

"He has many noble qualities, lady."

"The world has gone wrong with him, and he has to fight it for a living; but he is not a bad man at heart."

"As he is the one who kidnapped me, I am sure that he it was who attempted to carry off Miss Hartwell."

Nick said nothing, and Zaphiel continued:

"But he got frightened and ran away?"

"No, no, lady, he was not along, for I was the man," assured Nick, falling into Zaphiel's trap.

"Ah! you were the brave man then?"

"My two men were killed, lady, and I was captured, while the one who got away was in charge of our little craft."</p

the next night the sloop ran into Portland Harbor.

She however dropped off to sleep soon after supper, unable to drive away a certain feeling of drowsiness that had come upon her.

When the sloop dropped anchor Nick entered and said:

"The drug put her to sleep, so get the stretcher and we'll go ashore, playing the injured mate racket to all we meet who are curious."

The transfer was successfully made, as has been seen, and when Zaphiel regained consciousness she found herself in a strange cabin, smaller than the other.

Her head was dazed, and she could not at first recall clearly where she was.

The cabin lamp lit up the little place, showing her that it was small, but neatly fitted up, and then she recalled her drowsiness and remembered what Nick had told her about the change of crafts.

"I was drugged at supper time, to let them make the transfer in safety."

"Thus fade my hopes of escape."

"Now I must submit to my fate and meet Black Brandt the smuggler chief."

So saying she arose and made her way upon deck.

Nick was at the helm, and the little smack was flying along through island-dotted waters.

"You have changed your craft, I see?" she said.

"Yes, lady, and you will pardon me, I hope, for quieting you with a drug; but our danger was great in the harbor of Portland."

"And where are we now?"

"In Casco Bay, miss."

"Then we will soon reach your retreat I suppose?"

"Within twenty-four hours, if the breeze holds fair as it is now, lady."

She said no more and seated on deck watched the varied and beautiful scenery of Casco Bay as the smack sped swiftly along through the island-dotted waters.

True to Nick's prophecy, for the breeze did hold fair, the smack ran into the secret basin within twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER XL.

BLACK BRANDT'S PLOT.

THE little smack with Zaphiel a prisoner on board, ran into the haven by night.

When coming in sight of the cliffs Nick had requested the captive to go below, and then had not only locked her in but darkened the ports outside with canvas so that she could not see the way.

He meant to take no chances as to the retreat being known, or that the captive should report how difficult was the entrance to it.

So the smack ran quietly into the inlet and was moored alongside of the bank in the stream.

The chief had heard the coming of the smack reported to him by the Indian, as Nick had signaled off-shore for the three beacons to be lighted.

But he did not meet the captive at the boat, so Nick escorted her up to the cabin of Black Brandt, which had been fitted up for her reception, he going to his quarters aboard the Evil Spirit.

So Nick led Zaphiel up to the cabin, and left her there in the charge of an Indian woman, Casco's squaw, while he said:

"This will be your home for the present, miss, and Lasca here will look to your wants."

"As it is late the chief may not see you until morning."

Zaphiel made no reply, but dropped into a chair and gazed about her.

The cabin was by no means unattractive, and had been arranged for the convenience of the fair captive.

There was a large bouquet of wild flowers upon a table, where also was set a supper with a bottle of rare old wine.

Lasca the Indian woman said politely:

"Pale-face lady want anything?"

"No, only my liberty! but do you stay here with me?"

"Me sleep there," and she pointed to a bed on the floor.

"Heap nice clothes for pale-face lady—see! big chief tell me show them," and she drew aside a curtain revealing a number of clothes hanging upon pegs.

"Yes, I'll look to my hunger now," and Zaphiel sat down at the table and ate some supper, taking a glass of wine, which she found excellent.

Then she retired for the night, telling Lasca she wished to see the chief at any time in the morning that suited his convenience.

In the mean time Nick had gone on board of the Evil Spirit and found his captain awaiting him.

"Welcome back, Nick, and I congratulate you upon your success."

"Thank you, sir, but it was no easy task I assure you."

"Doubtless not; but tell me of it?"

This Nick did, and the chief praised him for his success, after which he asked:

"Well, did you see the man I sent you to about the ransom?"

"No, sir."

"Ah! and why not?"

"He was killed a short while before I got to Boston, sir, by a naval officer whom he sought to rob."

"Indeed; who was the officer?"

"Captain Earl Underwood, of the Patrol, sir."

"Well, the fellow was a fool to attempt to rob a man of his grit."

"So many said, sir."

"Then nothing was done about the ransom?"

"I knew no one else to call upon, sir."

"Well, Nick, I guess I can arrange it, but you will have to return to Boston."

"I am ready, sir."

"You will go by stage-coach this time, so in the morning go to Kipp's farm, up in the Pine-lands, and get his horse."

"You will ride to Portland, and from there take stage to Boston, leaving your horse to await your return."

"I will have letters ready for you to Wo-ton-ka, the Woman of Mystery, and explain the situation to her fully, and she can negotiate with the Jew for the lady's ransom."

"You can arrange to return here as soon as it is agreed upon, and can take Miss Gripstein back to Boston in the sloop Wind Witch, which I can have so changed that no one will recognize her as the smuggler sloop."

"When the ransom-money is paid into the hands of Wo-ton-ka, the Witch, you can land your captive by night, and return."

"Yes, chief, I understand."

"Now get some rest, and be ready to start as soon as I give you the letters in the morning."

"Yes, Captain Brandt," and Nick went to his quarters to get much needed rest, for he had done his duty well, and not spared himself, even if it was to carry out a criminal plot.

"Well," mused the chief after the departure of the man:

"Well, I must have Wo-ton-ka do this work for me, for she is the very one."

"She can go to the old Jew and tell him the kidnappers of his child have asked her to arrange for her restoration by the payment of a ransom."

"Yes, she will do it and can keep the money for me until I can run in and get it."

So the chief arranged, and then he retired for the night.

The next morning Lasca the Indian squaw came to him and said the captive wished to see him.

He dressed himself in his best uniform, and made his way to the cabin.

There sat Zaphiel, looking pale, but very beautiful.

She had laid aside her riding habit for a dress found in the cabin, and sat quietly by the table, having just finished her breakfast.

The idea of the chief was to have Zaphiel keep the secret of who had been her abductor from Moses Gripstein.

In the few interviews he had had with the Jewish maiden he had read her secret, that she loved him, and that he could manage her he did not doubt.

His plan was to tell her that he had kidnapped her, because he loved her, and wished to hear from her lips that if he changed his life she would become his wife.

If she pledged this, then he would tell her that the ransom money, which he was compelled to pay to his men, he would return in full to her father, and within a given time he would give up his lawless career.

As for the Jew he knew that both Emanuel and Zaphiel were his own children, and in case of his death would inherit his enormous wealth, which would not be long in coming to them if he had his way about it, for the smuggler was determined that the life of the money-lender should not stand in the way an instant, and he could so bring it about as not to cast a suspicion upon himself.

The death of Emanuel would quickly follow, if it did not occur prior to Moses Gripstein's demise, and then Zaphiel would possess all.

With a bride so rich, and one who loved him, Black Brandt felt that he could afford to live a life of luxury the remainder of his days and no longer take chances of being captured and hanged as a buccaneer.

CHAPTER XLII.

LOVE AND HATE.

THE bold plot of Black Brandt to make Zaphiel the Jewess his bride, has been explained.

He had become infatuated with her beauty, and loved as much as his nature could love, for the one love of his life had been for Helen Marcy in the long ago, and now toward her, as Mrs. Cassiday, he felt only a feeling of revenge.

He had his hopes of revenge upon Claude Cassiday, and knew that by a blow at him he would hit the mother hard.

If he could capture Helen, too, he would make the hearts of the mother and brother ache bit-

terly for her fate, though he meant no harm to her more than to make her suffer with dread, and to wring the hearts of those she loved.

He had decided upon this course when the more he thought of Zaphiel Gripstein, the more he became enamored of her.

If he could recover the treasure he believed hidden away, as Kipp had said, somewhere in Hermitage Hall, and also Zaphiel and her inheritance, then he felt that he would be content to settle down in quiet enjoyment of the later years of his life.

So with this determination he went over to see his captive.

He approached at a quick step, and in his courtly manner doffed his cap, while he said, in a low, earnest voice he so well knew how to use:

"Will I ever be forgiven for stealing you away from your home that I might tell you how deeply I loved you, fair Zaphiel?"

She rose at his approach, and with an effort at self-control, answered:

"Zaphiel the Jewess, sir, is not one to hear words of love from a pirate."

"A pirate?"

"Yes, do you flinch at the name?"

"A smuggler, yes, I am, but no pirate."

"You are the reformed buccaneer, Kent," she said, with scorn.

His face paled at this, and he said, coldly:

"You have been misinformed."

"No, I know you as you were, and as you are. Yes, now as a kidnapper of innocent girls whose parents you rob before they can be restored to their homes."

"This from your lips to me, fair Zaphiel?"

"And why not, Sir Pirate?"

"I had been led to believe that you cared for me, that my deep, unspoken love for you had awakened some response at least in your heart," he said tenderly.

"You were wrong, sir."

"Yet your looks, your manner, your words, the few times that I met you, Zaphiel" he pleaded.

"Let us understand each other, sir, for I am not wholly guiltless, I admit with shame and confusion."

"I saw you at my home, and having pictured in girlhood a beau ideal, I found that you met my imagination."

"I learned who you were, and I saw only manliness, courage and grandeur in your appearance."

"Then I learned that you were an outlaw, a smuggler, and yet I admired you, I admit, though with regret."

"At last it came to me that you were a pirate, had won a reddened name as Kent the Buccaneer, and I tried to crush out every thought of you; but in vain."

"You won me to you with all your crimes staring me in the face."

"At last I met the blow that crushed out of my heart every atom of regard, of love, call it, of admiration, and the seeds of hatred sprung up in their place."

"It was when I knew that you had torn me from my home to rob an old man, that you showed no respect for me, and believed that you could win me by forcing me to love you."

"So it was that I hated you, and I thank the God of my people that my regard for you was but an infatuation, a fascination, which your acts crushed out utterly, and now I rejoice that I hate you."

"Under such circumstances, Sir Pirate, or Black Brandt, as you may prefer to be called, name the price of your ransom, get a messenger ready, and I will send to my father for a draft for the amount, payable to me, and to be given to you when I am once more out of your hateful presence."

The smuggler had heard her through in perfect silence, his face flushing and paling by turns.

The more severe she was toward him, the more he now loved her.

When at last she ceased speaking, he said:

"I have listened to all you have said, Zaphiel, and I can only say that I love you more."

"I would turn my heart against you, for your bitterness toward me, could I do so, but I cannot, for we cannot guard our own hearts."

"True, as I know to my cost, sir."

"When it was said that you were dead, I mourned your death deeply, and I felt that the love of my life was buried forever."

"Now I recall not one tear, one regret for that love, for it is gone, but did I love you now, alive, I would hate myself, yes, I would take my own life ere I could be so contemptible."

"I simply despise you, Black Brandt, so say no more to me about your regard for me, but name the sum of my ransom, for I assure you I wish to get away from your presence with all dispatch."

"You then refuse to hear my love for you?"

"Utterly do I refuse, and how can you profess to love one who despises, abhors you, and feels only contempt for one who has so dishonored the splendid face and form you bear of manhood."

"Very well; we will put it as a matter of business, Miss Gripstein, and for all the abuse

your fair lips have bestowed upon me, Moses Gripstein must pay dearly."

"Ah! that shows your character more fully."

"But name the sum that I may mention it in a letter to my uncle."

"There must be one who is a go-between, for there shall be no mistake."

"Very well, name your tool."

"It is for you to do."

"I know of no one."

"Would Wo-ton-ka the Witch suit you?"

"Yes, unless she is allied to you?"

"In no way, but I referred to her as one who could keep a secret, seeing that she holds the key to many hearts."

"Then she will do."

"Say to your father to request Wo-ton-ka to arrange for you, and to place the draft in her hands, subject to payment only upon your safe delivery to him."

"That is satisfactory, sir."

"But name the amount."

"Let me consider."

"Yes, because you have a chance to bleed the Jew, Moses Gripstein, you will thrust deep, I suppose?"

"Yes, I will ask a heavy ransom, from my great appreciation of you only."

"The amount, sir."

"Let me see, Moses Gripstein has the reputation of being worth well nigh half a million dollars, and as you are his idol, the apple of his eye, I do not consider it too much to ask as a ransom for the return of your sweet self the sum of twenty thousand dollars," said the smuggler with a smile of malignant joy.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE RANSOM.

If Black Brandt had expected to see the Jewish maiden cringe under the enormous sum he had named as her ransom, he was greatly disappointed.

He certainly had expected to see her turn to despair and pleading; but instead she coolly responded:

"Twenty thousand dollars, eh?"

"Yes."

"You value me highly, sir; but give me pen, ink, and paper and you will find out in due time that the money-lender prizes me equally as highly."

Black Brandt was disappointed and bit his lips with vexation.

The fair captive was proving more than a match for the clever outlaw chief, and he recognized it very clearly.

"You do not think the price too high then?" he asked.

"Oh no, I value myself highly, the more so since I feel as I do toward you," was the cutting response.

The smuggler muttered something akin to an oath and said:

"Suppose I double the price?"

"I have your price, sir, and I vow to you before I would have one more dollar paid, to add to your wish, I would suffer the torments of an inferno."

"You do not know me, Mr. Kent Curtis, if you think you can drive me."

The flashing eyes and stern face of the girl, with her suppressed manner told Black Brandt that she spoke the truth.

So he said quietly:

"Write the letter to your uncle, and submit it to me."

"I expect to do that."

"And the price named as ransom shall be accepted only on one condition."

"Name it, sir."

"That you do not betray me to your uncle."

"Ah!"

"I meant to ask no ransom from you, and sought to bring you here to win you alone."

"As you despise me, we will make it a matter of business, and so I demand my price."

"Do you give me your pledge not to betray me to your uncle as the kidnapper?"

"First, tell me what interest you hold with my uncle?"

"As a business man, he holds certain claims that interest each of us."

"Do you give the pledge?"

"Suppose I say no."

"I will then, as you have betrayed me to your uncle, seek to ruin him in his business in Boston as an honorable man."

"Can you do so?"

"Even if he is innocent I can, for a shadow of suspicion leaves a dark stain that is indelible."

"True, so I will give the promise not to do so unless you force me to betray you."

"Now let me write that letter, for I am anxious to remain no longer in your lawless retreat than I am compelled to."

Writing material was placed upon the table, and Zaphiel wrote and read aloud her letter, which was as follows:

"OUTLAW'S RETREAT.

"MY DEAR UNCLE:—
Do not be in the least alarmed for my personal safety, as I am in no danger, and in comparative comfort."

"I was kidnapped by a band of marauders to claim from you a ransom for my return, and it is placed at the high price of twenty thousand dollars, so you see they value me highly."

"The only means of paying this ransom that I can see, is to place a check in the hands of Wo-ton-ka, the Woman of Mystery, for her to draw, and to pay over to the one who delivers me in safety into her hands."

"She can be trusted. I am sure, and I can see no other way out of the difficulty."

"If you agree to these terms, send a note by the bearer, written in Hebrew, and I will be home as soon after as it is possible for me to get there."

"Again let me assure you that I am safe, and comfortably situated, with ample clothing, food, and a feminine attendant."

"My dearest love for yourself and brother."

"Ever your devoted ZAPHIEL."

The chief had her read the letter twice over, and then asked:

"Why have him write you in Hebrew?"

"To prevent others from knowing the contents of the letter should aught happen to the bearer, and because, as you are satisfied with my letter, I shall now copy it in the Hebrew language."

"You would deceive me."

"Upon my honor, no!" she said indignantly. As he still hesitated she said:

"Have you no Hebrew in your band who can translate what I write?"

"Yes, there is a Jew sailor here."

"Then, when I hand my letter to you, take it to him before you give it to the messenger."

"I will do so," and soon after the chief left with the letter.

But he had spoken falsely about a Jew sailor being in his band, but had said so to test her.

Feeling convinced that there was nothing in the letter that would betray him, he sought Nick and gave it to him with the one he had written.

"Nick, have you a Hebrew friend anywhere?"

"I have, sir, in Boston."

"Then have him translate this letter to you, and also, when you get a response, take it to him and have him write you a translation in English."

"But be sure you can trust him."

"I am sure of that, sir, for I saved him from being hanged once and gave him the money to set him up in business."

"Then he does not know me as a smuggler, only as a sailor."

"I see; but now you must be off, and tell Kipp to let you have one of his horses."

"Here is a purse of gold for you, and here is a letter for Moses Gripstein, which you must deliver in a different disguise from the one in which you carry him the one from his daughter."

"Trust me for that, sir."

"If you need more money it tells him to let you have it."

"Now, go, and success to you."

"One letter goes to the witch, sir, I see."

"Yes, and will arrange with you, after you have the Jew's answer, and the return of the girl can be through Wo-ton-ka."

"Yes, chief, I will make no mistake, for I am anxious to serve you, and also to make gold for myself."

"Expect me back, chief, just as soon as the trip can be made, for I'll lose no time," and Nick departed upon his important mission.

Then the chief turned away and mused to himself as he went toward his vessel:

"Thus ends my dream of getting rich and reforming."

"Well, the girl has spirit enough for a dozen women, and yet she may break down utterly, and change toward me, for women are like weather-vanes, turning with their humors to every quarter that suits them best."

"It's a big ransom to ask, but she drove me to it by her cutting words."

"And the old Jew will pay it without a word."

"He will be glad to know by my letter that I am not dead, and decide to make out of me in some way the ransom he pays to get the fair Zaphiel back again."

"Well, it will be money for me in a lump, and I can now turn my attention to revenge on the Cassidays."

"That young fellow, Claude, is determined to hunt me down, and it would be a grand stroke of revenge if I could run off with his sister, force her to be my wife, and then let them know that she had wedded Kent the Buccaneer."

"Yes, that will be my game to play after I get old Gripstein's money."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE MESSENGER.

THE little sloop, which went under the command of Officer Manning, made its search in Casco Bay and reported at the rendezvous with the schooner Patrol.

But neither vessel had found any trace of the little smack, and after a week's further search together, it was decided that Emanuel Gripstein should return home and report the situation.

He was to go in the sloop with Officer Manning and a small crew, while the Patrol was to further continue her search.

Emanuel, in talking the situation over with Captain Underwood, decided that as ransom was the motive of the kidnappers of his sister, they had doubtless already communicated with Moses Gripstein as to their price for her return in safety.

So the little sloop started northward under all sail, Captain Underwood making the rendezvous at Portland within a given time, when Officer Manning was to return there, give up the craft to her owner and rejoin the Patrol.

The run of the sloop to Boston was a rapid one, and Emanuel landed one night just after dark.

Hastily he made his way home, and entering the door held a hope that his sister might be there after all.

There sat the money-lender in his favorite chair, no longer counting his money, but looking white-faced and haggard.

As his eyes fell upon Emanuel, he cried earnestly:

"The God of Abraham bless you, my son! but have you brought her with you?"

This dissipated the hope of the young man and he sat down in a dejected sort of way, but rallying quickly for his father's sake, said:

"No, father, but I have hope that all will come well."

Then he told the story of the noble search made by Earl Underwood and the officers and crew of the Patrol, adding:

"Ransom alone is the cause of her being taken from us, father, and we shall soon hear from her kidnappers— Ha! some one is at the door now!"

He went quickly to the door and admitted an elderly man, with gray hair and beard.

"I am here to see Mr. Moses Gripstein," he said.

Emanuel led him to his father's room, and the stranger said:

"You are the money-lender, Moses Gripstein?"

"I am. What would you mit me?"

"And you, young man. Who are you?"

"Emanuel Gripstein, sir, is my name."

"Ah! then I am in the right company, for I bear a letter from one Zaphiel Gripstein to—"

"Ah, my child! my child! You come from her?" cried the Jew excitedly, while Emanuel said sternly:

"Quick, sir, tell us what news you bring of my sister."

"This letter."

Emanuel seized the letter and read aloud in the Hebrew tongue just what the reader heard Zaphiel read to the smuggler chief.

"Oh! where is my child?" groaned Moses.

"Where she will be safe until her ransom money is paid."

"It will be paid, oh, yes, the money will be paid, as soon as we know just what is to be done and how," said Emanuel, quickly.

"Does not the letter explain?"

"Yes, mine son, write the checks for the shen-tilsman, and I will sign it putty quicks," cried the Jew.

"No, father, this must be gone into deliberately, so let me manage it."

"Vell, vell, you vas knows best."

"Now this is Zaphiel's writing, and no mistake."

"She is well and comfortable, and will be restored to us on the payment of this enormous ransom, twenty thousand dollars."

"It will be paid, and so far good."

"Now, who are you, sir?" and he fixed his dark, piercing eyes upon the face of the messenger.

"I am the bearer of that letter."

"You are one of the gang of kidnappers, eh?"

"No, I am a go-between, and I get pay for my services."

"I see, and if I put a knife hard against your breast I could force the truth from you."

"You could force nothing from me that I do not know."

"I was asked to bring that letter to Moses Gripstein, and was to be well paid for the work, when I delivered a response."

"That is all I know about the affair, so I can give you no more information."

"I believe you are telling the truth; but from whence do you come?"

"I have a farm up the coast, and a man came there and engaged me for the work I am doing."

"Well, I will write an answer to this letter agreeing to the terms, and you come here for it to-morrow night, for meanwhile I have to see a person named in the letter."

"I will be here," and the stranger left.

for it came direct from her, the date upon it being not a week old.

It told them something tangible, that Zaphiel was in the custody of her kidnappers, and it would take twenty thousand dollars to have her return to them.

To his delight Emanuel saw that his father made no cry-out against the large ransom demanded.

In fact Moses Gripstein would have gladly paid any sum to get his daughter back again, and when he was thought to be so very rich he was surprised more money had not been demanded, and he was accordingly happy over getting off so easily.

The next morning Emanuel went up to the home of Wo-ton-ka the Woman of Mystery.

She greeted him pleasantly, and at once said, while her face changed to one of sadness:

"I am sorry that your beautiful sister has fallen into evil hands, and Miss Hartwell has twice been here to urge me to do something for her."

"Heaven bless her dear soul; but is it in your power to help my sister?"

"Perhaps yes."

"Well, I have a letter from her."

The woman showed no surprise, but coolly said:

"Yes, written from the den of her captors, naming the amount of ransom demanded."

"You know this?"

"Yes."

"But how?"

"Do you forget that I read signs invisible to others?"

"True! but the letter says her captors demand twenty thousand dollars in ransom, and—"

"An enormous sum, and what does Moses Gripstein say to it?"

"He will gladly pay it, but he wishes to know that there is no mistake of course."

"He wishes to place a draft for the amount in your hands, and ask to have my sister restored to you, when from you her captors can receive their pay, but only when there is no doubt but that my sister will be beyond peradventure safe."

"I understand."

"You will do this?"

"Yes."

"And you will only pay the money when my sister is in your care?"

"Only then, and she will be safe, for no one could take her from me once they had brought her here, take my word for that."

"I will, and I will now place the draft in your hands, receiving from you a receipt to send back, that you have the money, and you can write under a seal, your own time and place for the return of my sister."

CHAPTER XLV.

WO-TON-KA AS AN ALLY.

In the messenger who had gone to visit Moses Gripstein, with a letter from his daughter, the reader doubtless recognized Nick the Kidnapper.

The call upon the Jew was not his first one that night, for after arriving in town, disguised as an old man and farmer, he had made his toilet more secure by a few additions and then went to the cabin of Wo-ton-ka the Woman of Mystery.

She had just turned away a visitor, full of awe at her wondrous power, and taken her seat on the piazza, her pets about her, when the dog announced by a growl the coming of another stranger.

"I am sorry, for I wished to prepare for my journey to-morrow, as I cannot believe that Black Brandt is dead."

"No, no, that kidnapping of the Jewess looks too much like his work."

As the stranger approached, the parrot, with remarkable perspicuity called out:

"Rascal aboy! Run, villain, run, the Patrol will catch you!"

Nick started, turned deadly pale and was almost tempted to take the bird's advice.

But he held on and soon stood before the witch.

The whole family of the woman seemed to resent the coming of Nick, for the cats got their backs up, the raven croaked, the dog uttered a most dismal howl and the parrot grew profane, for he muttered very audibly:

"Durned jail-bird!"

The smuggler felt that he was recognized beyond all doubt, and growled out:

"I guess I've struck a nest o' witches."

But the woman said, sternly:

"Silence!"

The pets which had not proven themselves so dumb, relapsed into silence, while Wo-ton-ka asked:

"Well, sir, how can I serve you?"

The man was frightened, with all his nerve, and stammered forth:

"I have a letter for you from one whom you know well, but whose name I must not speak."

Quick as a flash the woman caught the cue, and said:

"From Black Brandt?"

"Yes."

She could hardly keep down her joy, but said, quietly:

"Sit down and give me the letter."

"That dog is looking at me, as though he wanted to eat me up."

"He knows you, but will do you no harm."

"All of my pets seem to recognize you."

"Know me?"

"Yes."

"Who am I?"

"Do you wish to see the master you serve?"

"I left him not long since."

"I do not mean your earthly master?"

"Who is he?"

"Gaze up at the flag over my roof."

The man did so, and saw on a green flag a red representation of his Satanic Majesty.

"I believe you are a witch," he said.

"That is what men call me. Now sit there while I read this letter, but make no hostile demonstration against my friends here, or they will all be on top of you in an instant," and Wo-ton-ka entered her cabin, for she dared not trust herself to read the letter before the man.

As for Nick, he sat as still as a statue, not daring to blink his eye, for the dog and cats, the parrot and raven, all had their eyes upon him.

He suffered torments, and so remained until Wo-ton-ka reappeared, greatly to his relief, for it was growing dark.

"Do you know the contents of this letter?" she asked.

"About what is in it I know."

"Tell me what you do know?"

"That I am here to negotiate a ransom which you will receive for the chief, and hold until I place in your hands the girl."

"Yes, that is it, and the girl?"

"Is the rich Jew's daughter."

"Moses Gripstein?"

"Yes."

"You have a letter to him?"

"Yes."

"From his daughter?"

"Yes."

"You are the one who kidnapped her?"

"Who says so?"

"I do."

"Then I need not deny it."

"She is at your retreat now?"

"Yes."

"And your chief did not go down with his vessel, as reported?"

"Oh, no, he is not the man to die that way."

"And you are going to see the Jew?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

"Come back to see you."

"Well, from the letter I have the Jew will doubtless call and see me, so you will return to-morrow and I can give you a full answer."

"I will be here; but at what time?"

"At this time to-morrow evening."

"You'll be outside?"

"I'll be here."

"But I want you to be outside."

"Why?"

"On account of those pestiferous varments," and he pointed to the "Pets."

"They will not harm you as you come at my request."

"Good-night, and go now to see the Jew."

"I'll do it," and Nick walked away at a very brisk pace for a man of his seeming years, for his make up caused him to appear over sixty.

He congratulated himself upon getting out of the way of the witch and her pets, and turning to look back saw a red, black and green lantern going up to the flagstaff over the cabin.

"They knew me," he muttered as he strode along now at a slow pace, on the way to the house of Moses Gripstein.

Wo-ton-ka saw him disappear and then re-entered her cabin, hauled down the flag flying above, and ran up in its place three stained glass lanterns.

Then, lighting the swing lamp in her cabin she took Black Brandt's letter from her bosom and read it again.

It was as follows:

"RETREAT—SUNDAY.

"WO-TON-KA:—

"I do not believe that you have thought me dead as others have, for to you is given the power to know, and your art told you that I lived."

"I have been keeping very quiet of late, to let men think I have passed away: but to make the pot boil the while, I was led into the temptation of securing one whose ransom would pay me well."

"To her no indignity has been offered, she is comfortable here, and realizes that she will soon be free."

"The messenger who hands you this is my trusted friend and servitor, and I write to make you my ally."

"The messenger is to see the one who pays the ransom, and it is to be paid to you."

"He returns to report to me, and then sails with the captive to deliver her to you, bringing your receipt only, for you are to hold the money for me and a goodly share of it shall be yours of the share that comes to me."

"The balance of it goes to the crew of course."

"As soon as he returns with the receipt from you,

of the money received, he shall start back with the maiden, so arrange all plans with him that there may be no mistake."

"Before very long I hope to see you, and if only you will consent to another kidnapping, a handsome sum can be earned, and no harm done the one who is made captive, other than the loss of her money."

"Yours," B. B.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CAPTAIN NICHOLAS."

EMANUEL GRIPSTEIN'S visit to Wo-ton-ka the Witch resulted in his paying into her hands the check for twenty thousand dollars' ransom money for the safe return of his sister, and had it been half the fortune of the old Jew he would not have uttered a murmur.

With all his avariciousness he was not mean, for he sought to gain the name of being the richest of his race in the States.

He had made his venture as a conspirator in his youth, a patriot, but had failed, and his next ambition was to become a gold prince.

Not wholly for himself, though he did love luxury, but for his children.

So to serve one, his beautiful Zaphiel, the image of her dead Christian mother whom he had loved with his whole heart and soul, he had the willingness to give up all.

Wo-ton-ka received for the check, and told Emanuel Gripstein that she would arrange the whole affair satisfactorily.

She knew not just when the maiden would return, but the moment she was in her possession that moment she should be sent home.

With this Emanuel was satisfied, and he hastily wrote a note to Captain Underwood, calling him off from the search, and going to the wharf, where Officer Manning was awaiting him, for he had detained the sloop after hearing from Zaphiel, he gave him the communication for his captain, also explaining to the midshipman the situation.

True to his appointment Nick sought the home of the witch at twilight.

He had remained close all day, keeping his room, until late in the afternoon, when he made his way to the house of a Jewish friend.

What he wished there was to obtain a disguise, and upon leaving the dingy shop no one would have recognized the smuggler in the dandy naval officer with his smooth-shaven face, gold spectacles and tight-fitting uniform.

Emanuel was in the office as he passed the place.

Upon a sign recently painted was the legend:

"MOSES GRIPSTEIN & CO,

"MONEY-LENDERS, BROKERS AND COMMISSION

MERCHANTS.

"Money loaned on all kinds of property.

Diamonds and other Gems, Gold

and Silver Bought and Sold.

"Strict privacy in all transactions."

"MOSES GRIPSTEIN, EMANUEL GRIPSTEIN,

Z. GRIPSTEIN."

Such was the announcement, and Nick muttered:

"As Z. Gripstein is in my power now, and E. Gripstein in the office at work, my business is with old Moses I guess, and from what the chief said, the younger members know nothing of any business he has with the senior members of the firm.

"So here goes for a call on the old man."

He went to the private door, as directed by his chief, and let the knocker fall heavily.

A servant opened the door and said that Mr. Gripstein was up-stairs in his private office, and he would carry him the gentleman's card.

This, Nick, not being accustomed to polite society, had neglected to secure, so he said:

"Just say that Captain Nicholas of the navy wishes an interview with him upon important business."

It was but a couple of minutes before "Captain Nicholas of the navy" was admitted to Mr. Gripstein's elegant quarters.

Moses knew how friendly had been Captain Underwood in his search for Zaphiel

"MY DEAR MOSES:—

"When you hear that I am dead, take no stock in it, unless you attend the funeral as chief mourner."

"I am not only alive, but well and prosperous, and have a very rich cargo to send in soon."

"I will send it in my sloop to Boston, and she will be disguised as a trading coaster."

"As the cargo consists of laces, wines, and high-priced cloths, it is of very great value, for it came in on the English brig *Queensland*, and besides there are small packages from other vessels."

"The bearer of this will command the sloop, and with him will be six men."

"He will notify you upon his arrival, so that the goods can be removed, and they will be in casks and boxes bearing ordinary marks."

"The cargo should net you a very large profit as well as pay me liberally."

"I trust you and your family are well and happy."

"The Evil Spirit will soon be heard of again, greatly to the amazement of those who consider her wrecked and her captain dead."

"I managed to get hold of a very beautiful piece of jewelry, a bracelet, and send it to you as a gift to the beautiful Zaphiel, so you can say to her that it comes from an old friend."

"Expect the cargo in a few weeks."

"Yours,

"B. B."

"P. S.—Should my messenger find it necessary to use more money than he has with him, kindly supply his purse according to his wants."

This was the letter, and as the reader sees, it implied the idea that he was wholly ignorant of the fate of Zaphiel.

Not for an instant had Moses Gripstien connected him with that affair, for he believed in the adage of "honor among thieves," something which Black Brandt did not follow very closely.

"Vell, I vas glad to hear from my frint t'e captain, for I vas believe him a dead mans," said Moses, when he had read the letter.

"No, sir, he always fools them."

"But you vas a naval officer, don't you?"

"Oh no, this is my get up as a disguise, seeing as the constables all know me."

"Fine, is it not?"

"It vas very pretty; but you will bring in t'e sloops?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mit a cargo on board for me?"

"I will."

"Ven vill you come?"

"I will be here within three weeks, I guess."

"Vell, that is goot: but you don't vas hear of my daughter?"

"Your daughter?"

"My Zaphiel."

"I'd be proud to know her, sir."

"I mean you vas know noddings of her?"

"No, I never had the honor."

"She vas kidnapped."

"Impossible!"

"It vas drue: she vas kidnapped from my house and it almost broke my heart."

"I don't wonder: but who did a deed so dastardly?"

"If I vas know I would kill him."

"Right you would be," said Nick, nervously, and he rose to go.

"Tell t'e captain my daughter, Zaphiel, vas kidnap, and if he finds her I give big monish though I believes she vill come home now."

"Vas you vant some monish, as t'e captain say?"

Nick always took what he could get, for fear of accidents, and with several hundred dollars in his pocket given him by the Jew, he departed and wended his steps toward the house of Wo-ton-ka.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE ARRANGEMENT.

NICK found the witch at home. He approached the cabin with the greatest caution, just as it was twilight, for he stood in holy dread of the pets of Wo-ton-ka.

Greatly to his relief he beheld her seated upon the piazza, and he walked forward with more confidence.

"You are prompt," she said, and she motioned to a seat.

He was a little surprised that she had penetrated his disguise as a naval officer, and more so that the "family" also appeared to have done so, for Holdfast growled as before, the raven croaked, the cats humped themselves and the parrot got at the bottom of facts by the words:

"What a fraud!"

Nick was uneasy in the extreme, but the woman quieted him with the words:

"You need not fear them."

"Now are you ready to return?"

"Yes."

"When do you start?"

"To-night, in the midnight coach."

"How do you go?"

"To Portland."

"From there?"

"My horse awaits me."

"It will take you several days to reach the retreat."

"It will."

"You have a letter from the Jew to his child?"

"Yes."

"Here is my receipt for the money in my hands."

"Yes."

"Hand this to your chief, and tell him that Wo-ton-ka never writes letters."

"You are wise."

"You can tell him all I would say?"

"Yes."

"Say that I will receive the maiden, and return her to her home."

"Very well."

"Now you are to bring her?"

"I am."

"How?"

"By vessel."

"I must know all, so I can cast my protection over the voyage."

"I am to bring her in the smuggler craft."

"Not the black schooner?"

"No."

"What then?"

"The sloop."

"Describe her."

"She is thirty tons burden, high in the bow and stern, remarkably long bowsprit and tall mast, with a boom equally as long; but let me tell you that the captain intends to change her as much as possible, so that she can run into port."

"By day?"

"I guess I'll run in by night, but remain here some days."

"Why?"

"Well, I am to bring a rich cargo to the old Jew, for I guess you are in with their secrets?"

"Oh, yes, I know everything, but the Jew did not suspect the chief of having kidnapped his daughter?"

"Not he."

"That is well; but now if the rig is changed how will I know your craft?"

"I cannot tell how."

"You do not know what change the chief will make?"

"I do not."

"Let me think a moment."

The man remained silent while the woman seemed lost in deep meditation.

At last she said:

"What course will you come?"

"Close along the coast as I dare."

"You must start on a given day."

"Why?"

"Because my Spirit Guardian must follow you from your sailing to port."

"Yes."

"I must know all, you see."

"I'll tell you all I know, for you could guess it if I didn't."

"And what I fail in my pets will supply."

Nick cast a bad eye at the pets, but made no reply.

"Now you must sail on a Friday."

"It's bad luck."

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes, but it is bad luck."

"It will be worse luck if you do not obey."

"I'll do it, for I don't want the craft hoo-doo'd."

"Then obey."

"To the top notch, Lady Witch."

"You are to wear this about your neck."

"Lady! it's a gallows."

"It is a guard."

"I'll do it!"

"The lady is to wear this amulet."

"It's very pretty," and the man fingered a gold cross and anchor combined which she handed to him, attached to a gold chain.

"You are to nail to your topmast head a flag I will give you."

And she entered the cabin, but soon returned with a blue flag, in the center of which was a white cross.

"I am to run this up to the topmast?"

"No, you are to nail it there!"

"Why, won't running it up do as well?"

The witch glanced toward her pets, and in chorus came a howl, whine, croaking, and the parrot's shrill voice shouting:

"Fool, obey!"

"I'll do it, only stop that infernal chatter."

"You will nail the flag to the topmast?"

"Yes, only with a gallows strung around my neck as a charm, and a cross aloft, how will they work together?"

"Do as I tell you."

"I will."

"And carry that flag there until the maiden is safe in my hands."

"Yes."

"By night you are to set three lanterns on your vessel."

"I will get them for you."

She went into the cabin and returned with three lanterns.

She fastened them in a row in a frame.

There was glass upon all four sides, and each side had some strange device painted upon it.

They were large lanterns, too, one blood red, another a bright blue, the third a deep green.

"They will burn all night, and are to go up at sunset, to come down at sunrise."

"They are to be fastened to the topmast, across the ship, and made secure there."

"Do you understand?"

"I do."

"Look out for trouble if you disobey me."

"I'd as soon think of disobeying the devil," was the frank response.

"You are wise; but remember, you are to tell no one of my plans to protect you, not even your chief."

"I'm dumb if you say so."

"When you reach port, anchor off here and bring the maiden ashore yourself, and I will sign a receipt for your chief for her."

"I understand."

"Now go."

Nick waited for no second bidding, but turned and departed at a very rapid gait, carrying the frame of lanterns in his hands, for there were lids on either side to put on making it look like a box.

He had been worked up by seeing a glare in the cabin, a green flame, and smoke coming from it, and it revealed things that fairly frightened him.

Then, too, the pets seemed thoroughly uneasy the whole while he was there and he was anxious to get away.

"It seems to me that I have seen her somewhere before; but where I cannot tell for the life of me."

"She's akin to Satan or I'm greatly mistaken."

"But I'll follow her instructions to the top notch and no mistake."

"Now to get out of this town, for I'm scared the whole time I am here."

"I have got a couple of hundreds ahead from the Jew, and I'll put in my expenses to the chief as treble what they are, so that gives me a nest egg, and that is what I am living for."

"By Jupiter! but at times when that woman looked at me I really thought I saw the most venomous hatred in her face and eyes."

"But she's a beauty in spite of being a witch."

"Now to get aboard the coach and take a nap until starting time; but I'll tell the chief I had to hire a vehicle 'specially," and with this resolve Nick went to the tavern, got his traps, and asked as a special favor that he might take his seat in the coach, though long before starting time.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A DAY OF BAD LUCK.

BLACK BRANDT had been getting his cargo together for the sending of it to the Jew in Boston.

Boston, so I hired a special carriage to leave town in, though it was expensive."

"You did right; but what have you there?"

"Some signal lanterns I arranged to show for the witch."

"Then all is well?"

"Could not be better, sir."

"You have letters for me?"

"The Jew was in such distress about his daughter he did not write, but told me what to say to you."

"He sent a letter to his daughter though, which I have here."

"It is in Hebrew."

"Yes, chief, but my friend in Boston read it for me and it is harmless."

"Good! but what did the witch say?"

"That she never wrote letters."

"Here is the receipt she gave me for the money."

"The Jew paid it then?"

"With a smile."

"I am sorry I did not say more."

"It would have been paid."

"I could not work it now, I guess?"

"No, chief, for all is arranged with the witch."

"And she has the money?"

"Every dollar, for she is to draw the money on the check and have it for you when you come, for she did not give it to me."

"Don't you think she was wise, Nick?"

"How so, chief?"

"Well, maybe you would have forgotten to return."

"Maybe so; but she's got it, or will have it, and you can trust her."

"With my life."

"Who is she, chief?"

"I do not know."

"It appears to me I have seen her before."

"I have the same idea, though I cannot place her."

"Well, chief, it's all arranged, and I am to sail Friday with the girl."

"Sail on Friday?"

"Yes, sir."

"No indeed."

"The witch consulted her stars and other ways of knowing things, and said Friday was the day I was to sail, getting up anchor just at sunset, rain or shine."

"Well, she knows."

"And she gave me a free protection from storms and dangers."

"Good!"

"Well, the sloop is all ready for you, and you would hardly know her."

"The lady is to have the cabin, and you are to take the crew you had before, with two others, and deliver the girl to the witch, after which you are to give the cargo into the hands of old Gripstein or his agent."

"Then I have a list of purchases for you to make, of stores, rigging and other things, when you will return at full speed for the retreat."

"Yes, chief."

"This is Thursday, so you must get off this Friday coming, to-morrow, at sunset."

"I'm ready, chief."

"You left your horse at Kipp's?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now go and get rest, while I take the Jew's letter to his daughter."

Nick obeyed, and the chief retraced his steps, making his way toward the quarters of his captive.

She saw him coming and arose to enter the cabin, when he called out to her:

"One moment, please, for I have a letter for you."

She turned quickly and awaited his approach, while she asked, eagerly:

"Has your messenger returned?"

"He has."

"And my father has written me?"

"Your brother has."

She took the letter eagerly and read its contents.

Then she said:

"My brother says that the ransom has been placed in the hands of Wo-ton-ka, the Woman of Mystery, and awaits my coming with the one you send as my escort."

"I have the woman's receipt for the money, so that makes it all right."

"When do I go?"

"Wo-ton-ka arranged with my messenger to bring you when he could, and you start Friday."

"An unlucky day it is said."

"Wo-ton-ka wishes it so."

"Then so be it."

"You can remain here until you go on board the vessel."

"Am I to go by sea?"

"Of course."

"Why not by land, when there is no need for me to be guarded as I am going home, and Wo-ton-ka has your money?"

"Because if you went by coach you would claim the protection of whoever you met, and stop the payment of the money, while my man would be seized and perhaps hanged."

"I am not treacherous, if you are, Black Brandt; but I shall be ready to sail on Friday," and Zaphiel bowed to end the interview.

The chief walked away with a muttered curse, and she did not see him again until he came to escort her on board the sloop Wind Witch.

"Remember your pledge, not to betray me to your father."

"I will keep it, unless you force me to break it."

Then came the order to get up the anchor, and the Wind Witch set sail on the ill-omened day—Friday.

CHAPTER L.

AN INTERVIEW ASKED FOR.

CAPTAIN EARL UNDERWOOD left no stone unturned to carry out his resolve to find Zaphiel Gripstein.

Her kindness to him had touched him deeply, when she was a mere girl entering her teens, and he a youth several years her senior.

He had felt that her heart had dictated, in its natural goodness, the saving of the locket for him, and that Emanuel had nobly aided her in her endeavor to serve him.

When he again returned to Boston he beheld her one day on the street.

He could not mistake those glorious eyes, that splendid face, grown now into beautiful womanhood though she was.

And glad was he when Emanuel had appeared aboard the Patrol that night, to tell him of the kidnapping of his sister, that he had a chance to repay the deep debt of gratitude he owed them.

He had returned to Portland from a fruitless search, to meet the little sloop by appointment.

Manning arrived the same day, and at once visited his captain in the cabin.

The letter of Emanuel was handed to him, and Earl Underwood said presently:

"Thank Heaven!"

But he was disappointed deeply that he had not been the one to rescue Zaphiel, that she had been ransomed, after all.

But the letter of Emanuel told him he had done his duty nobly.

So the sloop was turned over to the owner, Earl Underwood paying the charter price, though Emanuel had inclosed a check to his order for a large sum, asking him to divide it, after expenses among the crew.

But this the young captain would not do.

His men had done only their duty, and the charter of the sloop had been in the discharge of his duty.

So the Patrol set sail for Boston and ran there in good time.

She dropped anchor at sunset, and as soon as the young sailor had reported his return, he went to his home to visit his mother.

His home was an elegant one, and his mother, a gray-haired matron of fifty, one of the noblest ladies in the land, for her deeds of charity were known far and wide.

She gave him a warm welcome, and heard his story of his cruise.

"I am indeed sorry you did not find the beautiful girl, Earl, for I have often seen her, and she reminds me so much of your Aunt Lou, my half-sister, that I have always felt drawn to her."

"Then, too, she was the one who did you that good turn about the locket which you told me of."

"I do hope she will be soon restored to her home, for though I dislike her avaricious uncle, I feel sorry for his suffering at her loss."

Earl had been requested by Emanuel, in his letter to say nothing of the ransom to be paid, so he kept the secret, and later went on a visit to the home of Moses Gripstein.

He found both Emanuel and the Jew at home, and the latter little suspected him of being the youth whose locket he had so cleverly gotten possession of by a little sharp practice.

He gave him a most cordial greeting, for Emanuel had told him all that Earl Underwood had done, and ordered a bottle of his rarest old wine set before his guest, which was a treat indeed, for Moses Gripstein had wines in his cellar worth their weight in gold, almost, and the sailor was just the one, with his cultivated palate, to appreciate the worth of the ancient and rare vintage.

So the young captain heard the whole story of the messenger coming, and how the ransom was to be paid, and at a late hour left, urged most heartily by Moses Gripstein to:

"Come again, mine young gentlemans, for I vas haf blenty more of t'e same vines in t'e cellars, and you vas so velcome as if you vas my own fader."

"We will be always glad to see you, Captain Underwood, and when my sister comes she too will be happy to thank you for your kindness," Emanuel said.

Upon his return aboard ship Captain Underwood was told that a note had been left for him, and the bearer had said that it was important.

He found the note on the table in his cabin and saw that it was addressed in a delicate, feminine hand, while the seal was in black wax with the lettering:

"WO-TON-KA THE WITCH."

He broke open the letter and read:

"SIR:—Wo-ton-ka, the Woman of Mystery, requests most urgently, that you favor her with an interview, the moment you receive this letter, be it night or day.

"Do not fail if you would do a humane act."

Captain Underwood was puzzled.

He had seen the Woman of Mystery, had heard much of her, and being a sailor was a trifle superstitious, so had belief in her supernatural powers to a certain extent.

"Who brought this letter?" he asked the steward.

"The officer of the deck gave it to me, sir."

He sent the steward to find out who the bearer of the letter had been, and just when it had come.

The answer came that a youth had rowed out in a light skiff and handed the letter up over the side, requesting that it be at once delivered.

"At what hour?"

"Soon after dark, sir," was the reply.

Captain Underwood pondered a moment in a way that showed he was in doubt what to do.

Then he looked at his watch and saw that it was midnight:

"I do not care to go to her home, but I will not neglect this call as it says I can do a humane act."

"Now what she wants heaven only knows; but I will go, and at once."

He ordered a boat called, threw on his cloak over his uniform, slipped a loaded pistol into his sword-belt and going on deck told the officer of the watch that he expected to return within a couple of hours at least.

Not wishing the boat's crew to know where he was going he had them row him to the wharves, and bidding them wait until his return, walked rapidly away in the darkness.

It was over a mile to the cliff, but he walked rapidly and at last came in sight of a red and green light set above the cabin of the witch.

Drawing nearer he discovered that a black flag waved from the flagstaff, bespangled with stars of silver, which were illuminated by a light in some strange way throwing its reflection upon them.

His approach was heralded by a shrill:

"Officer ahoy! officer ahoy!"

"It's a devlish parrot," he muttered, for a moment almost tempted to answer the hail.

Then he strode on and as he reached the piazza Wo-ton-ka the Woman of Mystery advanced to meet him.

CHAPTER LI.

THE PATROL PUTS TO SEA.

Earl Underwood was impressed at the sight of the Woman of Mystery.

Beautiful she certainly was, with her magnificent eyes, brilliant complexion and perfect teeth.

Her form was faultless, and she was robed in a long train dress of velvet, cut high around the neck and with tight sleeves.

A gold collar set with rubies encircled her neck, massive bands of gold set with emeralds were upon her wrists, and about her slender waist was a belt of the same precious metal studded with diamonds.

In her hair glistened a diamond comb.

"You are welcome, Captain Underwood, and I am glad you did not neglect my request," she said.

The young officer had taken in the situation at a glance.

The dog, the cats, the raven and the parrot he saw.

Then the death-chair and the woman in all her gorgeousness.

Now he bowed low with uncovered head, and said in his pleasant way:

"I never negelect the call of a lady and of duty, madam."

"Enter my humble home, please, for I have something to tell you."

He obeyed, and took the seat she placed for him.

Then sitting near him, she said:

"I saw your vessel come in this afternoon, and it was with great pleasure, as I have work for you to do."

"Work for me?"

"Yes, for I have heard of your devoted services in behalf of that beautiful Jewish maiden, and know that you have just returned from a cruise in search of her."

"Yes, I was so unfortunate as to be unsuccessful; but she is soon to return, as you doubtless know, though I regret exceedingly through no act of mine."

"Now she is to return through act of yours."

"You surprise me."

"I mean that you shall rescue her."

"You are kind; but when can you sail?"
"Within five minutes after my foot touches the deck."

"Good! this is Thursday?"

"Yes."

"How is the wind?"

"Fresh."

"From what quarter?"

"South."

"Then it is fair?"

"Yes."

"Now listen to me attentively."

"I am all attention, madam."

"To-morrow night, or at sunset, a vessel will set sail from a point on the Maine Coast above the mouth of the Kennebec."

"It will be a sloop, with high bow and stern, and of some thirty tons burden."

"A better description of her I cannot give you, as her rig even may be changed; but my idea is that she may play coaster, though she is a lawless craft."

"That you may therefore know her you will find by day a large blue flag, with a white cross in it, floating from her topmast head."

"By night, you will see three lanterns aloft, though the flag will also be there, nailed to the mast."

"The lanterns are set in a frame, and will run across ship."

"Their color is red, blue and green, and as they are glassed on each side you can see them from ahead, broadside or astern."

"When you see the craft give chase and catch her, though she may be fast."

"Don't let her pass you by day or night, and she will hug the shore coming down, I am sure."

"Do not fire upon her, as in her cabin you will find Zaphiel, the Jewess."

"Great God!"

"It is true, and she is coming here under an escort, for me to deliver her to her father while I keep the ransom, now in my hands, for the kidnappers."

"Now, you must make me a promise?"

"With all my heart."

"The man who commands the craft, whatever she may have been changed into, schooner or cutter, is the kidnapper of Miss Hartwell, and also of Zaphiel the Jewess."

"His name is Nick among his comrades, but his real name is Ned Nicholas."

"This man you must promise me to hang as soon as you catch him so that he may not cheat the gallows by escaping."

"I'll do it with wholly disinterested delight, madam," was the energetic reply.

"Be sure of your man, though."

"I will. Nick, or Ned Nicholas."

"Yes, and you are to hang him, for let me tell you that I know him as one who robbed my father and mother in the long ago. He was an orphan and homeless, and they gave him a home; but he robbed them, and when discovered killed them before my very eyes."

"Nor was this all, for he joined a band of Gypsies, and led them to where I dwelt after my parents' death, a girl of ten, and they stole me from my home, and as a Gypsy queen I was reared."

"I'll hang him up by the heels," indignantly said the young sailor.

"No, hang him when you get off port and sail up the bay with him hanging there, as a warning to evil-doers."

"I will see him and be avenged, and before he dies just tell him that *Lucita Sutherland* bade you hang him and see him wince."

"Tell him that *Lucita Sutherland* is now known as *Wo-ton-ka* the Witch, but to you alone I betray this secret."

"I will keep it inviolate, madam."

"I believe that you will; but there is one more thing for you to do for me."

"Yes, with pleasure."

"Pick out one of the crew of the vessel, whom you think can be relied on to betray his comrades rather than die, and bring him to me the night you arrive."

"You can report one less in the number taken to account for him."

"I will do it with pleasure, for I can refuse you nothing."

"Now you understand what you are to do?"

"Perfectly."

"You are to simply let the Jewess know that you were in search of outlaw craft and knew she was to be brought home, so rescued her."

"Then take her to her home yourself."

"I will do so, but it seems that I am getting honors I have not won."

"That is my affair and not yours, for so I will it."

"I am at your service, my dear madam, and yours to command."

"If I had to fight to rescue Miss Zaphiel, I would like it better."

"You certainly show your will in hanging her kidnapper without recourse to judge or jury."

"I'll do it, madam, and it will give the Patrol good luck to hang such a villain; but I had better not delay in sailing."

"No, for I have no more to say."

"Good-by."

She held forth her hand and he grasped it warmly and was gone.

His men bent to their oars with a will at his stern command, and ten minutes after he hailed the Patrol while nearing it, and ordered the anchor up and sail set.

The watch below turned out in a hurry and the Patrol went flying out to sea with all canvas drawing.

CHAPTER LII.

THE KIDNAPPER CRAFT.

THE crew of the Patrol were really startled by the earnest and hasty manner of their young captain.

Officers and all knew that he had gleaned more news ashore of importance, and each and all were most anxious to get the vessel going as soon as possible.

She found a quarter-breeze from seaward when she gained an offing, and it sent her along at six knots to the hour.

Down the coast she ran, keeping just far enough out to prevent a vessel passing between her and the coast from slipping by unseen.

Morning came and found her well on her way.

Late in the afternoon she had Portland off her port bow, and then she laid her course under shortened sail between Cape Elizabeth and Sequin Island.

Not only were lookouts placed at the fore and main cross-trees, but a third was perched upon the bowsprit, and in the shrouds stood a midshipman upon either side.

The men aloft were ordered to keep watch, one to port, the other to starboard, afar off, for "a vessel flying a blue flag with a white cross," at the mast-head.

"Which mast-head?" was asked.

"It may be a sloop, perhaps a schooner, so keep a watch for a craft with such a flag," was the command.

The man on the bowsprit and the midshipmen in the shrouds kept their eyes on the coast, and nearer by.

So the Patrol moved along until nightfall, when a dozen men were put on the lookout, and told to watch for three lights in a row aloft.

"Red, blue and green, and the colors running across ship," called out Captain Underwood, and a chorus of voices came in response:

"Ay, ay, sir."

Though soon to be on the watch, Captain Underwood was determined there should be no mistake, in case the kidnappers' craft anticipated her time of sailing.

On the Patrol no lights were shown, and in darkness she sped along.

Soon after dark set in the wind changed, from southerly and came from seaward.

"The very thing, for it will be fair for both the craft we seek and ourselves," said the young captain.

Just at dawn a cry came from aloft:

"Light, ho!"

"Whereaway?" called out Earl Underwood, who had not left the deck all night.

"Dead ahead, sir."

"What do you make out, my man?"

"Three lights, sir, red, blue and green in a line."

A shout came from the crew, and Captain Underwood ran up aloft with his glass, for they could not be seen from the deck.

"Yes, that is my craft."

"She is heading straight toward us, and is some two leagues off the coast."

"I will get between her and the shore while the darkness remains, for I wish no running in where we cannot follow."

So saying he descended to the deck and the schooner fell off a few points, and went along at a lively pace, for the wind was brisk now.

"She runs well and is coming along as before," said Earl Underwood, half an hour after.

It was just growing light, and by the time darkness had lifted from the sea the Patrol was a league off-shore, and the stranger was almost abreast of him a mile and a half further out to sea.

That the schooner had not been sighted was very evident.

But as she went about straight for the stranger, the movements of the latter proved that her discovery where she was gave all a surprise.

But after yawning wildly, she held on as before, though she set a flying jib.

She was sloop-rigged, and had all sail set, while she slipped along at a very lively pace, a fact which those on board the Patrol soon realized.

"There is no mistake, for there flies the white-cross flag in the blue field," said Earl Underwood.

"We are gaining, sir, but slowly."

"A shot over her might fetch her to."

"No, Mr. Manning, that craft holds too valuable a cargo to risk a shot at."

"We will find the lady we were searching for on board of her."

Manning was surprised at this information, and delighted as well, and Earl Underwood let his crew know just what they were after, and could hardly prevent them from cheering.

The wind freshened as the sun rose, and yet blew steadily from a quarter to aid both vessels and fair for a run home.

"She sails like a witch," said Manning.

"Yes, her name is the Wind Witch," answered Captain Underwood.

So well did the little craft sail that hours passed and yet she was half a mile ahead.

She was crowded with canvas but sailed on as though simply on her course and not a fugitive.

The Patrol was crowded with sail and steadily creeping up.

Later in the afternoon Earl Underwood, who had kept his glass constantly upon the sloop, went forward, sprung into the starboard fore shrouds and hailed.

"Sloop ahoy!"

"Ahoy the cruiser!"

"What sloop is that?"

"The Peggy Kniffen from Bath."

"Whither bound?"

"To Boston."

"Why have you been running from me?"

"I hain't been a-running, for I seen yer was a cruiser and if yer wanted me to come to you could fire a shot over me."

"What is that flag for?"

"My old woman put it thar fer luck."

"What is your cargo?"

"Provisions for the Boston markets."

"Any passengers?"

"A lady who hain't very well."

"I will come to and you run alongside."

"I'll board yer and show my papers, cap-

ting."

"Do as I order you, sir!"

The schooner at once ran up into the wind, and the sloop had nothing else to do but do as ordered.

The man who came on deck was Nick.

"Waal, captin, here I be."

"Seize that man!"

The order was obeyed with a promptness that was startling to Nick.

Leaping upon the sloop Earl Underwood was followed by a dozen men and the crew of the craft were seized in an instant.

Going to the cabin he entered, when he received no response to his knock.

There lay upon the floor the form of Zaphiel, unconscious.

"Send the surgeon here at once."

The surgeon came, and at once said that the maiden was under the influence of a drug.

She was at once placed in the surgeon's charge, when Midshipman Manning was ordered on board the Wind Witch with a prize crew, and told to sail for Boston under full canvas.

The surgeon was to accompany him, and the schooner was at once crowded with canvas and headed also for Boston.

The crew of the sloop were put in double irons and sent down into the schooner's hold.

The capture of the kidnappers had been made, and thus far Earl Underwood had kept his faith with the Woman of Mystery.

CHAPTER LIII.

JUSTICE.

"SEND the prisoners to me one by one," ordered Earl Underwood, when the schooner was headed for Boston.

Nick was the first to appear, and his face was deadly pale.

Something seemed to tell him that he had come to the end of his rope.

"Captin, what be I guilty of that you treat me so?" he asked, in a whining tone.

"See here, Ned Nicholas, none of your pretense, for I know you."

The man staggered under the blow, and Captain Underwood continued:

"You are guilty of having murdered Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland, your benefactors, when you were a youth."

"You sold their daughter *Lucita* to the Gypsies, and you have been pirate and smuggler for years."

"You are the kidnapper of Miss Celeste Hartwell, and you escaped from jail before your trial."

"You are the kidnapper of Moses Gripstein's daughter, and you are now carrying her to Boston to receive ransom for her restoration to her father."

"I'll betray every time, for I've got plenty o' comrades and only one life."

"You are my man," and Captain Underwood gave orders for the man to be confined apart from the others.

As the others could only be charged with smuggling, and suffer a short imprisonment, he was content to let them go, feeling sure they would be imprisoned rather than betray their comrades.

The other man he had threatened with death and the result was satisfactory.

So Captain Underwood went on deck and signaled the sloop to know how Zaphiel was.

The response was most satisfactory, and so the schooner lay to and waited for the sloop to come alongside, when Captain Underwood sought an interview with Zaphiel.

He found her fully restored and heard her story of her adventures, and how the kidnappers had drugged her food at dinner to render her unconscious, when the Patrol was gaining.

She heard of her brother's cruise after her on the Patrol, and of how lately Captain Underwood had seen her father and Emanuel.

Then the young captain said:

"Now I am going to leave you to come on in Officer Manning's and the surgeon's charge, Miss Gripstein, while I hasten on to port; but when you arrive I will meet you and have a carriage ready to drive you to your home."

Hastening away to avoid the expression of Zaphiel's gratitude, Captain Underwood soon had the schooner under full sail, having ordered Midshipman Manning to follow under shortened canvas.

"It is necessary for you to arrive at least a couple of hours behind me," he had said.

The next afternoon when the Patrol headed into Boston Bay the Wind Witch was hull down astern.

Then came the command:

"All hands on deck to witness execution!"

The men fairly started at the order, and looked toward their young captain as Nick the Kidnapper was brought on deck heavily ironed.

"Mr. Burnett, rig a hangman's rope on the starboard fore-yard-arm and stand by to hoist up that man when I give the command."

"Mercy, captain!" shouted the outlaw.

But there was no mercy in the stern face of the commander, as he said:

"Ned Nicholson, I charge you with many crimes, all worthy of death; but chiefest of all are murder, piracy, and kidnapping."

"I bade you yesterday prepare for death, and I hope that you have done so, for you have just five minutes to live."

The five minutes passed most rapidly to the doomed wretch; but his cries for mercy were in vain, the noose was slipped around his neck, the order was given to haul away, and still in irons the outlaw was hoisted into midair and swung over the side of the schooner as she dashed gracefully along up the harbor.

The startling sight soon riveted all eyes upon her, and the town was wild with excitement as the Patrol ran to her usual anchorage and lay motionless upon the waters, just as nightfall came and shut out the scene.

The body was at once lowered and sent ashore, along with the prisoners, excepting the one whom Earl Underwood still kept on his vessel.

Soon after the Wind Witch ran in, and as she anchored astern of the Patrol, Earl Underwood boarded her, Zaphiel was aided into the boat and reaching the shore she was rapidly driven to the home of her father and brother.

But during the welcome Earl Underwood slipped away, returned aboard his vessel, and soon after he was in the same carriage driving swiftly along toward the home of Wo-ton-ka, the smuggler prisoner by his side.

"I have returned, madam, and here is your man," he said.

"I saw, sir, and I am avenged."

"Heaven bless you, and now let me say that this man shall render good service for his pardon, for to-night he goes with me upon a journey."

Her words were ambiguous, but Earl Underwood asked no questions, and as she said no more, took his departure to report what he had done to the commandant of the port.

And one hour after his departure, the witch and her prisoner went, by special conveyance, on a long journey, the result of which shall now be revealed

CHAPTER LIV.

PUT TO USE.

It seemed to Claude Searle that after discovering that the Evil Spirit had not been destroyed, he found it impossible to run across her, try as he might.

He had just returned from a week's cruise in search of her, when his sister surprised him, as she met him at the landing with the information that Wo-ton-ka, the Woman of Mystery, was at the Hall, and that she was most anxious to see him.

She also said that she had arrived by special conveyance from Boston, and was accompanied

by a man who appeared very much afraid of her.

Claude hastened to the house and gave Wo-ton-ka a warm greeting, for he remembered how kind a friend she had been to his mother, sister and himself.

"I have come to see you, Mr. Cassiday, for I tracked you here, and I have something to say to you of great importance— Nay, I can talk before your mother and sister as well."

"I wish to tell you that before I left Boston the Patrol came in with Ned Nicholas hanging in the rigging."

"He was the kidnapper of Miss Hartwell, and afterwards of Miss Zaphiel Gripstein, while he was an officer of Black Brandt's band of smugglers."

"More still, he was the murderer of my parents, sold when I was a mere child to Gypsies, and I was raised by that wandering people."

"But I sought to get an education as best I could, and I became a fortune-teller, and delved in the black art, seeking the secrets of people to awe them by my power."

"The tribe made me rich, and I earned large sums of money by my dealing in sorcery."

"Thus I gained my power."

"But when a girl of fifteen I met one whose fortune I told, and I madly loved him."

"He professed to love me and we were secretly married; but he deceived me and only lately did I meet him again."

"I loved him through all, and when I met him again knew him and sought to redeem him from his evil ways, though he knew me not."

"I believed at first that I would be successful, but now I know he has gone back to his old life of piracy, that he it was who sent Nick Nicholas to kidnap Miss Hartwell, who kidnapped Zaphiel the Jewess, and is guilty of other crimes."

"So now I hate him, and he shall suffer the punishment his crimes deserve."

"That man is known as Black Brandt the Smuggler; but he was known as Kent Curtis, and a terrier as Kent the Buccaneer."

Words cannot portray the amazement at this announcement in the minds of Mrs. Cassiday and Claude; but the Woman of Mystery left them no time to express surprise, but continued:

"Now, Captain Earl Underwood captured this man with Ned Nicholas, and his life was pledged him if he would betray his comrades."

"He promised, and I brought him here to place him in your hands, and he will pilot you to the retreat of Black Brandt, for the honor of his capture and death belongs rightly to you."

"Do I speak the truth, Hutchins?"

"You do," answered the man to whom she appealed.

"Then do your duty and you gain your pardon along with the reward I promised you."

"But ere you go, Mr. Cassiday, let me tell you that I know that which will clear your name of dishonor."

"I have the confession, given before witnesses whom no one can doubt, of the man who wrecked your life, who stole the money you were accused of taking, who led you into the trap, drugged your wine that awful night for you, and with two others swore falsely against you."

"I refer to Searle Sanford, your brother officer who sought your ruin, along with Buck Brackett and Luke Telfair."

"Sanford went to the bad, was dismissed the navy and came to me to get aid in gambling."

"I got him under my influence and made him confess his sins, and he told me the story of the plot against you."

"I told him if he would write down, on a certain day, the crimes of his life, I would tell him where he could get a lot of gold."

"He came and did so, and I had Commodore Harold Hartwell, Judge Veazey, and three others of prominence behind a curtain in my cabin, and they heard all, and the judge has the confession."

"Not one of them knew why he was called there by me, but I was so earnest in my pleading for them to go, that they did so."

"Searle Sanford found his gold, a purse I gave him, with the advice to leave the country, and Commodore Harold at once wrote to the commanders of the vessels on which Brackett and Telfair are officers, ordering them sent home."

"They arrived last week, and the confession of Sanford was shown them, and they admitted its truth, and were forced to resign from the service at once."

"So you see that crime against you will soon be made public."

"Now, go on your mission of retribution against Black Brandt, for you will find among his outlaw crew, so this man informs me, none other than Searle Sanford, who appears to bear a part of your name."

"It's an accident, thank Heaven!" said Mrs. Cassiday, overjoyed at what she had heard.

As for Claude Cassiday, he said nothing, but his face revealed all that he felt.

He took the hand of Wo-ton-ka and pressed it in silence, kissed his mother and sister, and motioning to the informer to follow him, strode away.

Half an hour after the Sea Cloud was under sail, bound for the secret retreat of the buccaneers,

neers, for they had become nothing more nor less than pirates under Black Brandt's leadership.

CHAPTER LV.

CONCLUSION.

THE Sea Cloud arrived off the retreat of the buccaneers about midnight, and as the sloop Wind Witch was away, and her capture not known, the informer, who was acting as pilot, said that the signals could be given for the beacons to be set.

So the signals were set, and soon the Indian on the lookout placed the beacons.

Taking the helm the informer ran in without a miss, for by his side stood Captain Claude, to kill the outlaw pilot if the vessel touched a rock.

Once in the basin the boats were lowered with muffled oars, and made a dash for the Evil Spirit, lying so quietly at anchor.

A landing was also made, and one-third of the crew rushed for the camps of the buccaneers.

Seeing the sloop, as he supposed, head in, the Indian lookout knew there was no further need of his services, so he rolled his blanket about him and laid down to sleep; otherwise he could have seen that all was going wrong in the harbor.

The Evil Spirit was carried by boarding, and Kent Curtis, the Buccaneer chief, fell, after a fierce combat with swords, facing Claude Cassiday.

And one other man fell, wounded, whom Claude had run through, and whom he recognized too late to check his hand.

That man was Searle Sanford, and before dying he reiterated in the presence of the crew of the Sea Cloud, that the charges he had made against Claude Cassiday were wholly false.

The victory was a grand one, though the brave crew of the Sea Cloud had suffered cruelly; and when the Evil Spirit led the way out of the basin, with the Sea Cloud in her wake, both vessels were crowded with prisoners and booty.

As the informer had done his duty, Claude dispatched him to Hermitage Hall with a letter to Wo-ton-ka and his mother, asking them to meet him in Boston, after which the man was told to go his way and sin no more.

Some days after the good citizens of Boston, upon awakening one morning, were surprised to see two beautiful vessels anchored side by side in the harbor just astern of the Patrol.

One was jet black, the other was snow white, and the news soon spread that Mark Cassiday, The Rover was again in port, and this time came as the captor of Black Brandt's vessel and of his Sea Brigand's retreat.

As Commodore Harold Hartwell was then in command of the port, Mark Cassiday reported his capture to him.

The commodore heard his story before others, then bade him visit him at his home a couple of hours later, and in wonder, Claude returned to his vessel, the Evil Spirit.

Soon after the news floated through the town that Claude Cassiday had been bitterly wronged, and it was said the paper would give the whole story on the following morning.

Up to the home of the commodore went Claude, and then in the library of the rich man he heard the story of how Harold Hartwell had wronged him, robbed him of the treasure legacy left by his father and grievously sinned against him.

It was a terrible story to tell, but the commodore told it, and said more—that when he heard Searle Sanford's confession in the cabin of Wo-ton-ka, he had made his confession to his daughter, and she had demanded that the same story should be told to the wronged young sailor.

"And still further," added the commodore: "I have sent in my resignation, and shall retire to Hermitage Hall and pass the remainder of my days, unless you bring me to punishment for my crimes."

"Never, sir; and no one shall ever know the story from my lips," declared Claude, earnestly.

The next morning the paper, which had given Claude such faint praise on other occasions, made amends for all by publishing the whole confession of Searle Sanford, with the story of the young Rover's wrongs, his deeds of daring, and his noble, useful life.

When Mrs. Cassiday and Helen arrived, accompanied by Wo-ton-ka, they went at once to their home, their hearts happy at the praises sung of Claude's courage and career.

That very night Wo-ton-ka's cabin was deserted, and the Woman of Mystery disappeared, but, as Mrs. Lucita Sutherland, she became an inmate of the home of the Cassidays for life.

Claude Cassiday was reinstated in the navy and given a lieutenancy, which he at once resigned, having been exonerated by his being taken again into the service he loved so well.

As for Commodore Hartwell he kept his word and went to Hermitage Hall, as soon as he could settle up his business affairs, but not a dollar of his property would Claude take.

Still he got it, a year after, when he went to

Hermitage Hall to claim Celeste as his bride, and it was said a handsomer couple was never seen.

Whether it was fear of discovery that killed old Moses Gripstein, or not, no one knew; but he died suddenly when he heard that Black Brandt was killed, and his two children inherited his large fortune.

Among his papers was found evidence that showed his Christian wife had been the half-sister of Mrs. Underwood, and this discovery made Earl a happy man, for his mother no longer refused her consent to his marriage with Zaphiel, whom he loved with his whole soul, and had the happy assurance that he had won her heart, for she was free to confess that her regard for the buccaneer had been only an infatuation.

Brought together by the friendship of Earl Underwood and Claude Cassiday, Emanuel Gripstein and Helen often met, for she had married a young naval officer and been almost immediately left a widow.

These meetings ended in a love affair which resulted in Helen promising to become the wife of Emanuel if he would only change his name, so that of Greystone was settled upon as a compromise.

Then the young widow kept her word and became Emanuel's wife, and neither had ever cause to regret it.

And so, good, generous reader, who has followed me on this long, eventful cruise, the anchor is let fall, for, Claude Cassiday, the Rover, has had his retribution.

THE END.

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